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THE

WORKS

Of the REVEREND

WILLIAM LAW, A. M.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING

I. Remarks upon a late Book, intitled, The Fable of the Bees, &c.

II. The Caſe of Reaſon, or Natural Religion, fairly and fully ſtated, &c.

III. The abſolute Unlawfulneſs of Stage Entertainments fully demonſtrated.

LONDON:

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MDCCLXII.

REMARKS

UPON

A BOOK,

INTITLED

The Fable of the Bees,

OR

Private Vices, Publick Benefits.

IN A

LETTER to the AUTHOR.

To which is added,

A POSTSCRIPT, containing an Obſervation or two upon Mr. *Bayle*.

By *WILLIAM LAW*, M. A.

THE THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for J. RICHARDSON, in *Pater-noſter-row*.
MDCC LXII.

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PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

SIR,

I HAVE read your ſeveral Compoſitions in favour of the Vices and Corruptions of Mankind; and hope I need make no Apology, for preſuming to offer a Word or two on the Side of Virtue and Religion.

I ſhall ſpend no Time in Preface, or general Reflections, but proceed directly to the Examination of ſuch Paſſages as expoſe *moral Virtue*, as a Fraud and impoſition, and render all Pretences to it, as odious and contemptible.

Though I direct myſelf to you, I hope it will be no Offence, if I ſometimes ſpeak, as if I was ſpeaking to a Chriſtian, or ſhow ſome ways of thinking, that may be owing to that kind of worſhip which is profeſſed amongſt us. Ways of thinking derived from revealed Religion are much more ſuitable to our low Capacities, than any arrogant Pretences to be wiſe, by our own Light.

Moral Virtue, however diſregarded in Practice, has hitherto had a ſpeculative Eſteem

amongſt Men; her Praiſes have been celebrated by Authors of all kinds, as the confeſſed Beauty, Ornament, and Perfection of Human Nature.

On the contrary, *Immorality* has been looked upon as the greateſt Reproach and Torment of Mankind; no Satyr has been thought ſevere enough upon its natural Baſeneſs and Deformity, nor any Wit able to expreſs the Evils it occaſions in private Life, and public Societies.

Your Goodneſs would not ſuffer you to ſee this part of Chriſtendom, deluded with ſuch falſe Notions, of I know not what *Excellence* in Virtue, or *Evil* in Vice, but obliged you immediately to compoſe a *Syſtem* (as you call it) wherein you do theſe three things.

1*ſt*. You conſider Man, *merely* as an *Animal*, having, like other Animals, nothing to do but to follow his Appetites.

2*dly*. You conſider Man as cheated and flattered out of his natural State, by the Craft of Moraliſts, and pretend to be very ſure, that the "*moral Virtues are the political* "*offſpring which Flattery begot upon Pride.*"

So

So that Man and Morality are here both deſtroyed together; Man is declared to be only an *Animal*, and Morality an Impoſture.

According to this Doctrine, to ſay that a Man is diſhoneſt, is making him juſt ſuch a Criminal, as a Horſe that does not dance.

But this is not all, for you dare further affirm in praiſe of immorality, " *That Evil,* " *as well moral, as natural, is the ſolid Baſis,* " *the Life and Support of all Trades and Em-* " *ployments without exception; that there we* " *muſt look for the true Origin of all Arts and* " *Sciences; and that the Moment Evil ceaſes,* " *the Society muſt be ſpoiled, if not diſſolv-* " *ed* *."

Theſe are the principle Doctrines, which with more than Fanatic Zeal you recommend to your Readers; and if lewd Stories, profane Obſervations, looſe Jeſts, aud haughty Aſſertions, might paſs for Arguments, few People would be able to diſpute with you.

I ſhall begin with your Definition of Man. " *As for my part*, ſay you, *without* " *any Compliment to the courteous Reader, or* " *myſelf, I believe, Man (beſides Skin,* " *Fleſh, Bones,* &c. *that are obvious to the* " *Eye) to be a Compound of various Paſſions,*

 " *that*

* p. 428.

" *that all of them as they are provoked, and* " *come uppermoſt, govern him by turns whether* " *he will or no* *."

Surely this Definition is too General, becauſe it ſeems to ſuit a *Wolf*, or a *Bear*, as exactly as your ſelf, or a *Grecian Philoſopher*.

You ſay, " *you believe Man to be*," &c. now I cannot underſtand to what part of you, this believing Faculty is to be aſcribed; for your Definition of Man makes him incapable of believing any thing, unleſs believing can be ſaid to be a *Paſſion*, or ſome Faculty of *Skin* or *Bones*.

But ſuppoſing ſuch a Belief as yours, becauſe of its blindneſs, might juſtly be called a Paſſion, yet ſurely there are greater things conceived by ſome Men, than can be aſcribed to mere Paſſions, or Skin and Fleſh.

That Reach of Thought, and ſtrong Penetration which has carried Sir *Iſaac Newton* through ſuch Regions of Science, muſt truly be owing to ſome higher Principle. Or will you ſay, that all his Demonſtrations, are only ſo many blind Sallies of Paſſion?

If Man had nothing but *Inſtincts* and *Paſſions*, he could not *diſpute* about them; for

* Introduction.

for to *diſpute* is no more an *Inſtinct*, or a *Paſſion*, than it is a *Leg*, or an *Arm*.

If therefore you would prove yourſelf to be no more than a *Brute*, or an *Animal*, how much of your Life you need alter I cannot tell, but you muſt at leaſt forbear writing againſt Virtue, for no *mere Animal* ever hated it.

But however, ſince you deſire to be thought only *Skin* and *Fleſh*, and *a Compound of Paſſions*, I will forget your better part, as much as you have done, and conſider you in your own way. You tell us, " *that* " *the moral Virtues are the political Offſpring*, " *which Flattery begot npon Pride* *."

You therefore, who are an Advocate for moral Vices, ſhould by the Rule of Contraries, be ſuppoſed to be acted by *Humility*; but that being (as I think) not of the number of the Paſſions, you have no Claim to be guided by it.

The prevailing Paſſions, which you ſay have the ſole Government of Man in their turns, are Pride, Shame, Fear, Luſt, and Anger; you have appropriated the moral Virtues to *Pride*, ſo that your own Conduct muſt be aſcribed either to Fear, Shame,

* P. 37.

Anger, or Luſt, or elſe to a beautiful Union and Concurrence of them all.

I doubt not, but you are already angry, that I conſider you only as an Animal, that acts as Anger, or Luſt, or any other Paſſion moves it, although it is your own Aſſertion that you are no better.

But to proceed, " *Sagacious Moraliſts*, ſay " you, *draw Men like Angels, in hopes, that* " *the Pride at leaſt of ſome, will put them upon* " *copying after the beautiful Originals, which* " *they are repreſented to be* *."

I am loth to charge you with Sagacity, becauſe I would not accuſe you falſly; but if this Remark is well made, I can help you to another full as juſt; viz. " *That Sa-* " *gacious Advocates for Immorality, draw Men* " *like Brutes, in hopes, that the Depravity at* " *leaſt of ſome, will put them upon copying* " *after the baſe Originals, which they are re-* " *preſented to be.*"

The Province you have choſen for yourſelf, is to deliver Man from the *Sagacity* of Moraliſts, the Encroachments of Virtue, and to re-place him in the Rights and Privileges of Brutality; to recall him from the giddy Heights of rational Dignity, and Angelic likeneſs, to go to Graſs, or wallow in the Mire, Had

* p. 38.

Had the Excellence of Man's Nature, been only a falſe Inſinuation of crafty Politicians, the very falſeneſs of the thing, had made ſome Men at Peace with it; but this Doctrine coming from Heaven, its being a principle of Religion, and a foundation of ſolid Virtue, has rouzed up all this Zeal againſt it.

And God ſaid, *Let us make Man in our own Image, after our Likeneſs.*

This was a Declaration of the Dignity of Man's Nature, made long before any of your Sagacious Moraliſts had a Meeting. As this Doctrine came thus early from Heaven, ſo in the ſeveral Ages of the World, God has had his *Oracles*, and *Prophets*, to raiſe Mens Thoughts to their firſt Original; to preſerve a Senſe of their Relation to God, and Angelic Natures, and encourage them to expect a State of Greatneſs ſuitable to that Image after which they were created. To aſſure *them*, that, *they that ſleep in the Duſt of the Earth ſhall awake, ſome to Everlaſting Life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting Contempt. And they that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the Firmament*, and *they that turn many to Righteouſneſs, as the Stars for ever and ever* *.

The

* Dan. xii. 2, 3.

The laſt Revelation which God has made to the World, by his Son Jeſus Chriſt, is greatly Glorious in this reſpect, that it has more perfectly brought Life and Immorality to light; that it turns our Thoughts from the low ſatisfactions of Fleſh and Senſe, to preſs and aſpire after that deathleſs State of Greatneſs, where we ſhall be *as the Angels of God.*

It is not therefore the Sagacity and Cunning of any Philoſophers that has tricked Men into Notions of Morality, as a thing ſuitable to a pretended Dignity of Nature within them.

But it is God himſelf, who firſt declared the Excellence of human Nature, and has made ſo many Revelations ſince, to fill Mens Minds whith high and noble Deſires ſuitable to it.

Before I proceed to conſider your *Inquiry into your Origin of moral Virtue,* I ſhall take Notice of the Apology that you make to Jews and Chriſtians.

You are ſenſible that what you have ſaid is inconſiſtent, both with the Old and New Teſtament, and therefore thus excuſe yourſelf to your ſcrupulous Reader.

That in "*your Inquiry into the Origin of* "*moral Virtue, you ſpeak neither of Jews*

nor

" *nor Chriſtians, but Man in his State of Na-*
" *ture* and *Ignorance of the true Deity* *. "

The Abſurdity of this Apology will appear from hence; Let us ſuppoſe that you had been making an *Inquiry into the Origin of the World*, and ſhould declare that it aroſe from a *caſual Concourſe of Atoms*, and then tell your ſcrupulous Reader, by way of Excuſe, that you did not mean the World, which *Jews* and *Chriſtians* dwell upon, but that which is inhabited *by Man in his State of Nature and Ignorance of the true Deity*: Could any thing be more weak or ſenſeleſs than ſuch an Apology? yet it is exactly the ſame as that which you have here made.

For the difference of *Jew* or *Heathen*, no more ſuppoſes or allows of two different *Origins of Morality*, than it ſuppoſes or allows of two different Origins of the World.

For as the Creation of the World was over, and owing to its true Cauſe, before the Exiſtance of either *Jew* or *Heathen*, ſo Morality was in being, and ſprung from its proper Source, before either Jew or Heathen came into the World. And conſequently, neither the Origin of the one or the other admits of any different Account, becauſe in the after Ages of the World, ſome People were called

* P. 35.

led *Jews*, and others *Heathens*. Beſides, if you contradict the Religion of Jews and Chriſtians, in your Account of Morality, is it leſs a Contradiction, or leſs falſe, becauſe you pretend that your Face was turned towards *Pagans?*

If you was to aſſert that there was no God, or true Religion, could it be any Excuſe, to ſay that you was ſpeaking to a *Mahometan?*

2dly To defend your Account of the Origin of Morality, you ſuppoſe Man in a State of Nature, ſavage and brutal, whithout any Notions of Morality or Ideas of Religion.

Now this very Suppoſition, is ſo far from being any Apology for you, that it enhances your Accuſation: For you ſuppoſe ſuch a State of Nature (as you call it) as the Scripture makes it morally impoſſible, that Men ſhould ever have been in.

When *Noah*'s Family came out of the Ark, we preſume, they were as well educated in the Principles of Virtue and moral Wiſdom, as any People were ever ſince; at leaſt we are ſure they were well inſtructed in the true Religion.

There was therefore a Time, when all the People in the World were well verſed in moral

moral Virtue, and worſhipped God according to the true Religion.

He therefore that gives a *later* Account of the Origin of moral Virtue, gives a *falſe* Account of it.

Now as all Parts of the World were by degrees inhabited, by the Deſcendants of ſuch Anceſtors, as were well inſtructed both in Religion and Morality, it is morally impoſſible that there ſhould be any Nation of the World, amongſt whom there were no Remains of Morality, no Inſtances of Virtue, no Principles of Religion derived from their Anceſtors.

At leaſt it is abſolutely impoſſible for you to ſhow that there was any ſuch Nation, free from all Impreſſions of Religion, and Morality. This you can no more do, than you can ſhow that all the World are not deſcended from *Adam*.

So that your *Origin of moral Virtue* ſuppoſes a State of Man, which the Scriptures make it morally impoſſible ever to happen, and which it is abſolutely impoſſible for you to ſhow, that it really did ever happen.

But ſuppoſing ſome of the Poſterity of *Noah*, in ſome Corner of the World, ſhould have become ſo degenerate, as to have not the leaſt Remains of Virtue or Religion left among

among them; and ſuppoſe ſome Philoſophers ſhould get among them, and wheedle and flatter them into ſome Notions of Morality; could that be called an Account of the *Origin* of moral Virtue, when moral Virtue from the beginning of the World had been practiſed and taught, by the virtuous Anceſtors of ſuch a depraved Offſpring?

To make the taming of ſome ſuch ſuppoſed Savage Creatures the *Origin of Morality*, is as juſt a way of thinking, as to make the Hiſtory of the curing People in *Bedlam*, a true Account of the *Origin of Reaſon*.

3*dly*. Your Apology to your ſcrupulous Reader, as if your Origin of Morality related not to Jews or Chriſtians, is falſe and abſurd.

Becauſe, the Obſervations which you have made upon human Nature, on which your Origin of moral Virtue is founded, are only ſo many Obſervations upon the Manners of *all Orders* of *Chriſtians*. Tis their Falſeneſs, Hypocriſy, Pride, and Paſſion, that have induced you to conſider Morality, as having no rational Foundation in Man's Nature, but as the *political offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride*.

And

And yet you, *good Man*, are not talking about *Chriſtians*, or *Jews*.

But every Page of your Book confutes that Excuſe, and indeed needs muſt; for how ſhould your Obſervations relate to any but to thoſe People, whoſe Natures and Practices have furniſhed you with them?

"*I have*, ſay you, *ſearched through every* "*Degree and Station of Men*;" at laſt, you tell us, you went to the *Convents*, but even there you found that all was *Farce* and *Hypocriſy* *.

You tell us alſo, that whoever ſearches thus deep into *human Nature* will find, *that moral Virtue is the political offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride*. Yet this ſearching into all Orders of Men, into Convents, and from thence making this Diſcovery, that Morality is all owing to *Pride* and *Policy*, is not pronouncing any thing upon Chriſtians.

Nothing can be more weak than to form your Opinion of human Nature, upon the Tempers and Practices of all Orders of Chriſtians, and then pretend you are only treating of Man in ſuch a State of Nature, as you never ſaw one in, in your Life.

For

* p. 263.

For how can your Obſervations upon Men, under the Power of Education, Cuſtom, Laws, and Religion, tell you what Man is, in a ſuppoſed State, where all theſe are wanting ?

Or will you ſay that you are acquainted, and intimately acquainted with Men, ſo entirely diveſted of all the Ideas of Religion, Morality, and Virtue, that you can make their Natures a true Specimen of Man in his moſt ſavage, brutal Condition ?

Though your Knowledge of human Nature was great, yet you was forced, it ſeems, to viſit the *Convents*, before you could pronounce any thing of them. It ſeems therefore neceſſary, in order to know what Creatures Men are in a State of brutality, deſtitute of all Senſe of God and Virtue, that you ſhould know where to viſit them.

Again, this *Apology* of yours, happens to be inconſiſtent with the firſt and main Principle upon which your fine Diſcourſe is founded. I mean your Definition of *Man*, whom you define to be, beſides *Skin*, *Fleſh* and *Bones*, &c. *a compound of various Paſſions*. This is the vile, abominable, falſe, proud *Animal*, that you treat of under the Name of Man. In your Excuſe you tell us, this is Man only in a State *of Nature*, but

in

in your Introduction, you tell us, that to forbear complimenting, that Definition belongs both to *yourſelf, and the courteous Reader.*

So that you muſt either allow, that you and your courteous Readers are all Savages, in an unenlightned State of Nature, or elſe that the Man you have deſcribed, belongs to all Orders of Chriſtians.

Having ſhown the weakneſs and folly of your Apology, I proceed now to your more particular Account of the *Origin of moral Virtue.*

You are pleaſed to impute its Origin to *Pride* alone, that having the ſame Cauſe as fine Cloaths, we may wear as much, or as little, or as we pleaſe, without incurring any greater Offence, than a little variation in Dreſs.

If *Pride* be the only foundation of Virtue, then the more vicious any one is, the more humble he ought to be eſteemed; and he who is the moſt humble is at the greateſt diſtance he can be placed from moral Virtue. And a perfect Humility (which by moſt Moraliſts has been reckoned a Virtue) muſt according to this Account, render any one incapable of any Virtue; for ſuch a one not only wants that which you make the only

Cauſe of Virtue, but is poſſeſſed of the contrary Quality.

Having carefully conſidered human Nature, you have at laſt diſcovered, that "*the* "*moral Virtues are the political offspring which* "*Flattery begot upon Pride.*"

You are ſo fond of this Diſcovery, that you cannot help ſhowing us how you made it.

The firſt Moraliſts or Philoſophers, ſay you, "*thoroughly examined all the Strength* "*and Frailty of our Nature,* and *obſerving* "*that none were either ſo ſavage,* as not to "be charmed with Praiſe, *or ſo diſpicable, as* "*patiently to bear Contempt, juſtly concluded,* "*that Flattery muſt be the powerful Argu-* "*ment that could be uſed to human Creatures* *.

What a Graphilac Deſcription is here! One would think that you had been an Eye witneſs to all that paſſed, and that you had held the Candle to thoſe firſt Philoſophers, when they were ſo carefully peeping into human Nature. You do not love to dwell upon little Matters, or elſe you could have told us the Philoſopher's Name, who firſt diſcovered this *Flattery*; how long he looked before he found it; how he proved it to be agreable to Pride; what Diſputes happened upon the Occaſion; and how many Ages of the World

* p. 29.

World had paſſed, before this Conſultation of the Philoſophers.

But however, you paſs on to more material Points: " *They*, ſay you, (that is the Phi- " loſophers) *making uſe of this bewitching En-* " *gine, extolled the Excellence of our Nature* " *above other Animals. Having by this artful* " *way of Flattery, inſinuated themſelves into the* " *Hearts of Men, they begun to inſtruct them in* " *the Notions of Honour and Shame;—they laid* " *before them how unbecoming it was the Dig-* " *nity of ſuch ſublime Creatures, to be ſollicitous* " *about gratifying thoſe Appetites, which they* " *had in common with Brutes*, &c."

This you take to be a ſufficient Proof, " *that the moral Virtues are the political off-* " *ſpring which Flattery begot upon Pride.*"

I can go no further, till I preſent you with a fine Speculation of an *Abſtract-thinker*, upon the *Origin of the erect poſture of Mankind.*

" It was his Opinion, that the nearer we " ſearch into human Nature, the more we " ſhall be convinced, that walking upon our " Feet with our Body erect, was the *political* " *offſpring which Flattery begot upon Pride.*

" The firſt Legiſlators, ſays he, having " examined the Strength and Weakneſs of " Man's Body, they diſcovered, that he was " not ſo top heavy, but that he might ſtand

" upright on his Feet; but the Difficulty " was how to raiſe him up.

" Some Philoſopher more ſagacious than " the reſt found out, that though Man crept " on the Ground, yet he was made up of " Pride, and that if Flattery took hold of " that, he might eaſily be ſet on his Legs.

" Making uſe of this bewitching Engine, " they extolled the excellence of his Shape " above other Animals, and told him what " a groveling thing it was, to creep on all " four like the meaneſt Animals.

" Thus did theſe firſt Philoſophers ſhame " poor Man out of his natural State of creep- " ing,and wheedled him into the Dignity and " Honour of walking upright, to ſerve their " own ambitious Ends, and that they might " have his Hands to be employed in their " Drudgery ".

This Gentleman being deeply learned in the Knowledge of human Nature, has much the ſame Curioſities, concerning the Origin of Speech, and the firſt Invention of Truth, which he thinks upon a ſtrict Reſearch into Nature, may very juſtly be aſcribed to Pride and Flattery.

But to return to your Hiſtory. The next Thing your Philoſophers did, was this:

" *In order to introduce an Emulation amongſt*

" *Men,*

" *Men, they divided the whole Species into two*
" *Claſſes, vaſtly different from one another. The*
" *one conſiſted of vile groveling Wretches, which*
" *they ſaid were the Droſs of their Kind, and*
" *having only the Shape of Men, differed from*
" *Brutes only in their outward Figure; but the*
" *other Claſs of Men were made up of high*
" *Spirited lofty Creatures* *."

Chronology, and Geography, I preſume, are Studies not polite enough for your Attention, or elſe I ſuppoſe you would have told us the Time when, and the Place where all this happened.

For it is material to know what the World was doing before theſe Philoſophers made this Diviſion; whether before this, there was any Fear of God, any Belief of a Providence, any Duty to Parents, any Senſe of Equity, any Notions of Faith, or any Regard to Truth.

For if the Inquiry was about the Origin of *Seeing*, or *Hearing*, and you ſhould be ever ſo exact in telling me the manner how ſome cunning Philoſophers firſt brought that Matter to bear, I ſhould be very ſcrupulous about it, unleſs you told me the Time when, and the Place where they met, what they were doing before, how they came thither, and how they knew when they were there.

* p. 30.

Now there is juſt this ſame Difficulty in your Account of the *Origin of moral Virtue*.

For let me tell you, Sir, *moral Virtue* came amongſt Men, in the ſame manner, as *Seeing* and *Hearing* came amongſt them.

Had there ever been a Time, when there was nothing of it in the World, it could no more have been introduced, than the Faculties of *Seeing* and *Hearing* could have been contrived by Men, who were *blind* and *deaf*.

Were not the firſt Principles and Reaſons of Morality connatural to us, and eſſential to our Minds, there would have been nothing for the moral Philoſophers to have improved upon.

Nor indeed can any Art or Science be formed, but in ſuch Matters, as where Nature has taken the firſt Steps her ſelf, and ſhown certain Principles to proceed upon.

Perſpective ſuppoſes an agreement in the different Appearances of Objects.

Muſic ſuppoſes a confeſſed Perception of various Sounds; and *moral Philoſophy* ſuppoſes an acknowledged difference of Good and Evil.

Were we not all naturally *Mathematicians* and *Logicians*, there would be no ſuch Sciences; for Science is only an improvement of thoſe firſt Principles or Ways of thinking, which Nature has given us.

Take

Take away the Mathematicians *Poſtulata*, or thoſe firſt Elements and Principles of Reaſon, which are allowed by the common Senſe of Mankind, and were Philoſophers even as cunning as yourſelf, they muſt give up all the Science.

Do but ſuppoſe *all* to be invented, and then it will follow that *nothing* could be invented in any Science.

It is thus in all Sciences; the rationality of our Nature contains the firſt Rules, or Principles, and it is the Speculation of Man that builds and enlarges upon them.

As the Mathematician, ſeeing the acknowledged Differences and Proportions of Lines and Figures, proceeded upon them to enlarge Men's Knowledge in ſuch matters; ſo the moral Philoſophers, ſeeing the acknowledged Difference between Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, which the common Reaſon of Man conſented to, they proceeded to enlarge and improve upon them.

So that their Labours are but Speculations and Harangues upon thoſe common Principles of Morality, which were as connatural to the Reaſon of Man, as the firſt Principles of any other Science.

Moral Philoſophy may be compared to *Eloquence*; it is an Improvement upon the

common Reaſon of Man, as Eloquence is an Improvement upon Speech.

Now ſhould ſome *Connoſſieur* take it into his Head to inquire into the *Origin of Speech*, and tell the World, "That once upon a "time, ſome *Orators* ſeeing that Man had "ſomething in his Mouth, by the Move-"ment of which, he could make a particular "Sound, they told him of the Dignity and "Honour of uttering ſuch Sounds, and ſo "through the pride of his Nature taught the "*Animal* to ſpeak, though in reality, it was "neither natural to him, nor any true Ex-"cellence; but ambitious Men flattered him "into it, that he might be the fitter to go "on their Errands:"

Should any profound Thinker give this Account of the *Origin of Speech*, you would have a Right to ſay, that he had ſtole the Diſcovery from you, who have given us juſt the ſame falſe and ridiculous Account of the *Origin* of Morality.

For it is full as reaſonable, to make Eloquence the *Origin* of forming *articulate Sounds*, as to make the Harangues or Labours of moral Philoſophers, *the Origin of moral Virtue*.

Could it be ſuppoſed, that an Underſtanding ſo *fine* as yours, could be conveyed to your

your *Deſcendents*, and that you ſhould ever have a *Grandſon* as *wiſe* as yourſelf, it may be expected that he will be able to teach that Generation of Men, that *Seeing*, was firſt introduced into the World, by Sir *Iſaac Newton*'s Treatiſe upon *Opticks*.

To inquire into the Origin of moral Virtue, is to inquire into the Origin of *Reaſon*, *Truth*, and the *Relations* of Things.

And to fanſy that ſome Politicians contrived moral Virtue, is to fanſy that ſome Politician contrived *Reaſon* and Truth, and invented the Difference between one Action and another.

There is nothing that began to be, but what may be deſtroyed or ceaſe to be; but as Truth and Reaſon can never ceaſe to be, ſo it implies a Contradiction in Terms, for Truth and Reaſon ever to have had a Beginning.

It is the ſame in moral Virtue, which is *Truth* and *Reaſon*, conſidered in relation to Actions; and the Difference between one Action and another, is as immutable and eternal, as the Difference between one Line and another, and can no more be deſtroyed.

As *things* are different by their own proper Natures, independent of our Wills, ſo *Actions* have their own peculiar Qualities from themſelves, and not from our Thoughts about

about them. In theſe immutable Qualities of Actions, is founded the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs of them, which we can no more alter, than we can change the Proportions or Relations of Lines and Figures.

And it is no more the *Pride* of Man, that has made this Difference between *Actions*, than it is the *Pride* of Man, that makes the Difference between a *Circle* and a *Square*.

Moral Virtue therefore, if conſidered in itſelf, as the Rule or Law of intelligent Beings, had *no Origin*; that is, there never was a time when it began to be; but it is as much without Beginning as Truth and Goodneſs, which are in their Natures as Eternal as God.

But moral Virtue, if conſidered as the Object of Man's Knowledge, begun with the firſt Man, and is as natural to him, as it is natural to Man to think and perceive, or feel the Difference between Pleaſure and Pain.

For his rational Nature, as much implies a fitneſs to perceive a Difference in Actions, as to Right and Wrong, as it implies a fitneſs to perceive a Difference in things as to great and ſmall, pleaſing or painful.

It may now be inquired, Whether this moral Virtue be our *Law*, and how it appears, that we are under any Obligations to behave

ourſelves,

ourſelves, according to this Difference of *Right* and *Wrong* that appears in Actions?

Now the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of Actions themſelves is a Law to rational Beings, and the ſight of that reaſonableneſs carries an Obligation.

The different Magnitude of things, is a Reaſon to us, to acknowledge ſuch Difference; and he that affirms any thing contrary to the ſight of his Mind, offends againſt the Law of his Nature.

The different nature of *Actions*, is a Reaſon for us to act according to ſuch Differences, and he who does any thing contrary to the ſight of his Mind in that reſpect, ſins againſt the Law of his Nature.

Now that this is not an imaginary Obligation, or a Law fanſied by Moraliſts, may appear from hence; that this is a Law to which even the Divine Nature is ſubject; for God is neceſſarily Juſt and Good, not from any external Force, but from the Excellence of Juſtice and Goodneſs. *Reaſon* is his Law becauſe it is *Reaſon*. That therefore which is a Law to God becauſe of its Excellence, muſt ſurely be a *Law* to all Beings whom he has created capable of diſcerning that Excellence. For if the Reaſon or Excellence of the thing, be of ſufficient Force

to

to determine the Action of God, certainly it ought not to be thought too little to determine us in our Actions.

Nor can that be ſaid to be an imaginary ſpeculative Law to intelligent Beings, which is an inviolable Law to the moſt perfect, intelligent Nature.

2*dly*. It is the Will of God, that makes moral Virtue our Law, and obliges us to act reaſonably.

If you aſk how this Will of God appears, I muſt beg leave at preſent, only to ſuppoſe, that God is of infinite Juſtice, and Goodneſs, and Truth; and then the Thing proves itſelf: For ſuch a God muſt neceſſarily Will, that all his Creatures in their ſeveral Proportions, be Juſt, and Good, and True.

Few mathematical Demonſtrations conclude ſtronger than this. There is only one Objection to be made againſt it, which is to ſuppoſe, that God is neither Juſt nor True.

If rather than yield, you will put the *Epicurian* upon me, and ſay that God may diſregard us, and neither Will one Way, nor the other. It may be anſwered, that this is inconſiſtent with the Idea of God juſt laid down; for a God of infinite Goodneſs and Truth, can no more fail to Will Goodneſs and Truth in *every Inſtance*, than an infinite

Being

Being can fail to be preſent in every Place, or an omnipotent Being be deficient in any Acts of Power. So that it is abſolutely neceſſary to ſay, either that God, is not of infinite Goodneſs and Truth, or to allow that He requires all his Creatures in their ſeveral Capacities, to be Juſt, and True, and Good.

Here, Sir, is the noble and divine Origin of moral Virtue, it is founded in the immutable Relations of Things, in the Perfections and Attributes of God, and not in the *Pride* of Man, or the Craft of cunning Politicians.

As the Reaſons and Obligations to moral Virtue have always been in being, ſo has Mankind always had Sight of them: It being as eſſential and natural, for a rational Being to perceive theſe Differences or Actions, as it is for an extended Being to occupy Space.

And the Creation of a rational Nature, as much implies a Sight of the reaſonableneſs of things, as the Creation of an extended Being, implies its Poſſeſſion of ſo much Space.

Matter of Fact alſo ſupports this Obſervation: For Hiſtory tells us of no Age or Country, where Men have not agreed to aſcribe Juſtice, Goodneſs, and Truth, to the Supreme Being.

Now this ſhows, that they always not only knew, what Goodneſs, Juſtice, and

Truth

Truth were, but alſo that they took them to be ſuch excellent Qualities, as ought to be aſcribed to the higheſt and beſt Being.

How monſtrous is it therefore, to impute theſe fine moral Virtues to the Contrivance of Politicians, when all Ages of the World have agreed to aſcribe them to God, and number them amongſt his glorious Attributes!

God is Juſt, therefore there is ſuch a thing as Juſtice, independent of the Will and Contrivance of Man, is a way of reaſoning that cannot be refuted.

It is in vain to ſay, that there may be a Divine Juſtice and Goodneſs, and yet what we call Goodneſs and Juſtice amongſt Men, may be only a human Contrivance.

For to this it may be anſwered, that we cannot aſcribe any thing to God, of which we have not ſome Conception ourſelves. Did we not perceive ſome degrees of Wiſdom, we could not call him *All-wiſe*; did we not feel Power, and underſtand what it is, we could not aſcribe *Omnipotence* to God. For our Idea of God is only formed by adding *Infinite* to every Perfection that we have any Knowledge of.

So that had we not from the rationality of our Nature, as plain a Sight of Juſtice, Goodneſs, and Truth, as we have of *Power*,

Exiſtence,

Exiſtence, or any thing elſe, we could not attribute them to God.

That we are rational Beings, is as plain, as that we have Bodies, and bodily Senſes. As there is no Man ſo refined and elevated, but gives frequent Proof, that he is ſubject alſo to Inſtincts and Paſſions; ſo there is no one ſo addicted to an Animal Life, as to ſhow no Signs of an higher Principle within him.

It is this rationality of our Nature, that makes us both capable of, and obliged to practiſe moral Virtue, and brings us into a kind of Society with God and all other intelligent Beings.

For our Reaſon gives us a ſhare in that common Light, which all intelligent Beings enjoy, and by making us Partakers of the ſame Things, ſo far makes us of one Society.

By our Reaſon we know ſome Truths, which God, and all intelligent Beings know; and apprehend ſome Perfections, and different Qualities in Things and Actions, which all intelligent Beings apprehend.

Now by being let into this Region of Truth, by being able to ſee ſome Truths which God alſo ſees, and to know ſome Perfections which he alſo knows, we are as plainly declared to be rational Beings, and that Reaſon is one Law of our Nature, as

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the Principles of Fleſh and Blood ſhow us to be Animals, and ſubject to the Inſtincts of an Animal Life.

For how weak is it to ſuppoſe, that the *Animal* Life ſhould be the Foundation of Laws of Nature, ſo as to make it fit for us to act agreeable to its Wants and Deſires; and that the *Rationality* of our *Beings*, which is, in ſome degree, a Likeneſs to God, ſhould be the Foundation of no Laws of Nature, ſo as to make it fit for us to act ſuitable to its Perfection and Happineſs.

The ſhort is this. *Truth* and *Reaſon* is the Law by which God acts; Man is, in ſome degree, made a Partaker of that Truth and Reaſon; therefore it is a Law to him alſo. The more we act according to Order, Truth and Reaſon, the more we make ourſelves like to God, who is Truth and Reaſon itſelf.

This is the ſtrong and immoveable Foundation of *moral Virtue*, having the ſame Certainty as the Attributes of God.

Away then, I beſeech you, with your idle and prophane Fancies about the *Origin of moral Virtue*. For once turn your Eyes towards Heaven, and dare but own a juſt and good God, and then you have owned the true Origin of Religion and moral Virtue.

Thus

Thus much will, I preſume, be thought ſufficient to vindicate the Excellence and Obligations of *moral Virtue*, from the falſe and impious Accounts you have given of its Origin.

I proceed to conſider in the next place, ſome other Methods that are made uſe of to render *moral Virtue* odious and contemptible.

SECT. II.

THE moſt boaſted Objection againſt the Reality of Virtue which is urged by Men, who appropriate the Knowledge of human Nature to themſelves, is this, that no Action is performed by us through a *Love of Goodneſs*, or upon a rational Principle of Virtue, but that it is *Complexion*, *natural Temper*, *Education*, *Pride*, *Shame*, or ſome other blind Impulſe, that moves us in all our Actions that have the Appearance of Virtue. Thus a man who relieves an Object of Compaſſion, only gratifies his *commiſerating Temper*; he is ſubject to *Pity*, " *which is a Frail-* " *ty of our Natures, and of which the weakeſt* " *Minds have generally the greateſt Share, as* " *may be ſeen in Women and Children* *. A-

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* P. 42.

gain, " *The humbleſt Man alive*, ſay you, *muſt* " *confeſs, that the Reward of a virtuous Acti-* " *on, which is the Satisfaction that enſues upon* " *it, conſiſts in a certain Pleaſure he procures* " *to himſelf in contemplating his own Worth*; " *which Pleaſure, together with the Occaſion of* " *it, are as certain Signs of Pride, as looking* " *pale and trembling at any imminent Danger* " *are the Symptoms of Fear* *."

Now, Sir, if this be a true Account of the *humbleſt Man alive*, then by the Rule of Contraries, this muſt be a true Account of the *proudeſt Man alive*; *that the Satisfaction he enjoys in being ſo, conſiſts in a certain Pleaſure he procures to himſelf by contemplating his own Vileneſs.*

This accurate Deſcription you have given us of the *Pleaſure of the humbleſt Man alive*, muſt be owing to ſuch a feeling Senſe as the *blind Man* had of *Light*, who being asked what it was like, anſwered that it was like the *Sound of a Trumpet.*

But to conſider this Charge againſt human Virtue, that it is nothing but Education, natural Temper, or Complexion; this being ſo laboured a Point, I ſhall ſtate the whole Matter as clearly as I can.

1*ſt.* It is granted, that an Action is only then virtuous when it is performed, becauſe it

* p. 43.

it is agreable to Reaſon, and thoſe Laws which God requires us to obſerve.

Now this Virtue is Man's Duty, not as a Task that is impoſed upon him, but as it is the only Practice, that is the natural Pleaſure and proper Good of his being.

Virtue having that natural Fitneſs to a rational Soul, that fine Sights have to the Eye, or harmonious Sounds to the Ear.

A rational Being is in order, in its right State and Frame, when it is acting reaſonably.

The infinite Goodneſs of God makes him infinitely happy; and the Perfection of every Being is its Happineſs; and the greater and more perfect the Virtue of any one is, the more perfect is his Happineſs.

Now it is here to be obſerved, that an Action is not leſs virtuous, or loſes any of its Excellence, becauſe the Soul is delighted and made happy by it; for it is the very Nature of Virtue to produce ſuch Effects, and it ſhows the Rectitude of the Soul, when it can act virtuouſly with Delight, and feel its Happineſs in ſo doing.

This is being virtuous upon Principle, and through a *Love of Goodneſs*; for Goodneſs is loved for itſelf, when it is loved for what it is, the true Good and proper Delight of a rational Being.

Now will any one ſay that there is no Excellence in Virtue, that it is mere *Nature* and *Temper*, becauſe it is ſo agreable, ſo proper to our rational Natures; Then let him ſay there is no Excellence in the Goodneſs and Juſtice of God, becauſe they are ſo ſuitable to his Nature, and conſtitute his Happineſs.

Granting therefore that Virtue was its own Reward, as it elevates and perfects the Soul, and keeps it in a State of right enjoyment, it would not be the leſs reaſonable, on that Account.

For Happineſs is the only reaſonable *End* of every Being.

An action is not good, or virtuous, becauſe it is *Self-denial*, but becauſe it is according to Duty; and he who through long habits of Goodneſs, has made the Practice of Virtue to have leſs of Self-denial in it, is the moſt virtuous Man.

Now, it ts no Objection againſt the *Reality* of Goodneſs, that as rational Beings, we are *naturally* and *complexionally* diſpoſed to practiſe and delight in it; or that this natural Diſpoſition, may by Exerciſe, Meditation and Habits, be heightened and encreaſed.

For Cuſtom, Habit, and natural Temper, are proper Aſſiſtances of our moſt virtuous Actions, and cannot be ſaid to make them

leſs

leſs reaſonable, unleſs it be a Fault or Imperfection, to be habitually and ſtrongly diſpoſed to Goodneſs.

Thus much therefore is true of us conſidered only as *rational Beings*; that we muſt even in that State be by Nature and Temper formed to perceive Pleaſure, from ſome particular ways of acting; and that the very excellence of our Natures, conſiſts in a Fitneſs and Diſpoſition for virtuous Actions, which the more we improve and ſtrengthen by Meditation and Habit, the more reaſonable we make ourſelves.

It has pleaſed God in the Formation of Man, ſo to unite this rational Nature to a Body of Fleſh and blood, that they ſhall generally act together; and that the Soul ſhall as well be influenced by bodily Inſtincts, and Motions of the Blood and Spirits, as by its own Thoughts and reflections.

Thus, a delightful Thought conceived ever ſo ſecretly in the Mind, ſhall, at its firſt Conception, have the Blood and Spirits join in the Pleaſure.

So that every right Judgment of the Mind, every proper Averſion, or regular Love, has as much the Concurrence of the Blood and Spirits, as if they were the only Agents.

The Body being thus viſible an Agent in all that we do, has made ſome weak Heads

imagine, that we are nothing elſe but Body; as from the ſame want of Thought ſome have concluded, that there is nothing beſides the material World, becauſe nothing elſe is obvious to their Eyes.

The Soul being thus united to the Body, no Act of the Man is leſs reaſonable, or virtuous, becauſe it has the Concurrence of the Blood and Spirits: For this was the Intention of the Union, that a Creature of ſuch a Form, ſhould exert its Inſtincts and Paſſions in conformity to Reaſon.

For Inſtance, ſuppoſe any one ſhould meditate upon the Attributes and Perfections of God, till the great Idea had raiſed and warmed his Spirits; though the Reflection is then ſupported by the Agitation of bodily Spirits, yet the Meditation is not leſs religious, or leſs devout, or reaſonable, becauſe the Heat of bodily Spirits aſſiſted in it.

Suppoſe any one ſhould ſo often reflect upon an eternal ſtate of Darkneſs, and Separation from God, till his Blood and Spirits join in increaſing the Horror; ſuch an Horror would not be leſs reaſonable, becauſe the Body joined in keeping it up.

The mechanical Influence which our Spirits and Temperament have upon our Actions, does not take away from the reaſonable-

neſs

neſs of them, any more than the rational Frame of our Minds, which is naturally diſpoſed to acquieſce in the Reaſon of things, deſtroys the reaſonableneſs of Actions.

As it would be no Excellence in a pure thinking Being, to be equally inclined to Truth or Falſhood, ſo it would add no Merit to ſuch a mixt Nature as ours is, if our bodily Temperaments were neither more or leſs inclined to, or delighted with one ſort of Actions than another.

Let us only ſuppoſe, that a rational Soul and an animal Nature, were united to act in a State of Perſonality.

It cannot be, that the Reaſonableneſs of its Actions ſhould be impaired by the Body's appearing to have a Share in them, becauſe, it does not act according to its Nature, unleſs the Body does concur; and in ſuch a mixt Being, it is no more required that its Actions ſhould be performed abſtractly by pure Reaſon, than it is allowed that its Motions ſhould be merely Animal.

Yet this is the falſe Judgment, which Men who are not the greateſt Friends of Virtue make, becauſe the Influence of the animal Nature is viſible in the beſt of Men; and becauſe ſuch Enquirers generally converſe intimately only with the worſt, they raſhly con-

clude againſt *all Force* of Principle, and deny Reaſon to have *any* Share in our Actions.

From what has been ſaid, we may eaſily ſupport the *Reality* of Virtue, from all the Objections of theſe *Critics* upon human Nature.

For granting the Force of Education, the Power of Cuſtom, and the Influence of our bodily Inſtincts and Tempers; yet nothing can thence be concluded againſt the Share that Reaſon and Principle are required to have in our Actions.

For both Reaſon and Religion direct us to uſe the Influence and Aſſiſtance of all theſe Helps; and conſequently they no more leſſen or take from the Reality of virtuous Actions, when we are aſſiſted by them, than *Faſting* or *Prayer* make our Piety leſs excellent, becauſe it was aſſiſted by them.

And it is as ſuitable to our Natures to ſtrengthen and eſtabliſh our Virtue, by Education, Cuſtom, Complexion, and bodily Inſtincts, as it is ſuitable to Religion, to improve and heighten it by Faſting and Prayer.

And he who ſays, that ſuch or ſuch Actions have no Principle of Virtue or Religion in them, becauſe they are made eaſy by Education, Temper, and Practice, thinks as weakly, as if he ſhould affirm, that ſuch Actions have no Reality of Principle in them, becauſe they

they are the Effects of Meditation, and Habits of Attention; for good Habits of Body no more leſſen the Excellence of Virtue, than good Habits of Mind.

An Action is virtuous, becauſe it is an Obedience to Reaſon, and the Laws of God; and does not ceaſe to be ſo, becauſe the Body is either formed by Uſe, or created by Diſpoſition, eaſy and ready for the Performance of it.

A good Education would be a Sin, if the Benefit that is received from it, or the Facility of performing good Actions, took away from their Goodneſs.

Nay, all Habits of Virtue would, upon this foot, be blameable, becauſe ſuch Habits muſt be ſuppoſed to have rendered both Body and Mind more ready and exact in Goodneſs.

All theſe Abſurdities neceſſarily follow from this Argument, that there is no virtuous Principle in our good Actions, becauſe Cuſtom, Education, Temper, and Complexion, have their Share in them.

2*dly*. This Objection againſt the Reality of Virtue, is rather a Calumny, than any juſt Charge againſt it.

For as it is as certain, that we think and reaſon, as that we are ſubject to bodily Inſtincts

ſtincts and Habits; nothing can prove that our Reaſon and Reflection do not principally concur in any Action, but the Impoſſibility of it. He therefore that would prove that my Mind does not act upon a Principle of Reaſon, where he thinks that Temper or Complexion may carry me through it, can never prove it, till he can ſhow that there was no Principle of Reaſon, no proper Motive, no Precept of Duty to move me to it: For if there be a plain Reaſon in the Thing, if there be a Precept of Duty to excite my Mind, as well as a natural Diſpoſition in my Temper to perform the Action, it is impoſſible for the moſt penetrating Genius to prove, that my Temperament had a greater Share in the Action, than the Reaſon of my Mind; and conſequently this Objection is a mere Calumny, and an ill-natured Suſpicion, which can never prove itſelf to be juſtly made.

Now, that Reaſon is the chief Principle in the Performance of good Actions, may, in ſome Degree, be learnt from hence; that reaſonable and wiſe Actions never occaſion any Sorrow or Repentance in the Mind; but, on the contrary, in violent Actions, where the Fermentation of the Blood and Spirits may be ſuppoſed to have blindly hurried

ried on the Action, that Fermentation is no ſooner abated, but there ariſes a Pain in the Mind, and Reaſon condemns the Action; which Condemnation chiefly conſiſts in this, that Reaſon had not the Guidance of it; which is a plain Confeſſion, that it is the way of our Nature to have Reaſon govern the Inſtincts and Motions of the Spirits, and that ſhe ſhrinks, and is uneaſy at thoſe Actions, where ſhe was not the principal Agent.

If therefore Actions only ſatisfy and content us, by being approved by our Reaſon, it is a manifeſt Proof, that our Reaſon is the principal Agent in our good Actions.

Nor will it be any Objection to this, to ſay, that many People are ſatisfied with falſe Notions of Virtue and Religion; for this only ſhows that the Principle of Reaſon may be weak, and of very little diſcerning Force in ſome People; but ſtill it is their Faculty of Reaſon, ſuch as it is, that gives them Peace, when it preſides; and it is living contrary to Reaſon, that gives them Pain, as it gives Pain to others who enjoy a more enlightened Mind.

If the religious *Turk* abhors the Abomination of Wine, it cannot be ſaid, that ſuch Abhorrence is only the Effect of Temper, bodily Inſtincts, and Cuſtom, unleſs it could be

be ſhown that he would equally abhor it, though he was fully perſuaded that *Mahomet* was a Cheat.

From this Account of human Nature, we may be able to reject all thoſe Reproaches which are caſt upon Virtue and Religion, as if they were never founded upon any rational Principle, but were the caſual blind Effects of Cuſtom, Education, Temper, or Complexion.

1*ſt*. As it appears, that in our rational Natures, we are naturally and complexionally formed to practiſe and delight in reaſonable Actions, and that ſuch a Tendency of Temper or Nature towards Virtue, no more leſſens the Excellence of it, than the Rectitude of God's Nature, takes away the Excellence of his Actions.

2*dly*. That Actions are not leſs virtuous for being ſuitable to any Diſpoſition, whether natural or acquired, than for being ſuitable to the Reaſon of the Mind.

3*dly*. That *Education*, *Cuſtom*, *Habits*, *Complexion*, &c. are ſo far from taking away the Reaſonableneſs of our Actions, that we could not be ſaid to act reaſonably, unleſs we endeavoured to make a greater Progreſs in Virtue by their Aſſiſtance.

4*thly*.

4thly. That it is impoſſible, even in thoſe Actions, where *Cuſtom*, *Education*, *Complexion*, and *Habit* ſeem to be in full Power, for any one to prove that Reaſon and Principle have not the greateſt Share in them.

5thly. That Peace of Mind, which attends our good Actions, is a plain Proof of the Power which our Reaſon had in the Performence of them.

To come now to a particular Inſtance or two.

1ſt. Philo's Charity and *Compaſſion* is no Virtue, you ſay, becauſe it is mere Complexion and Temper; he gratifies his *Pity*, and acts in Conformity to his Blood and Spirits.

Now this is ſo far from proving that he has not the Virtue of Charity, that it might be urged as a Proof of his having it.

For his Body is in that Diſpoſition that it ſhould be, ſuppoſing that his Mind had been long excerciſed and indued with Habits of Charity; it gives that further Pleaſure in charitable Acts, which the right Turn of the Inſtincts, and Blood and Spirits, ſhould give to the Mind in every virtuous Action.

For as I have obſerved, Man is then in his beſt State, when the Courſe of the Blood and Spirits act in Concurrence with his Reaſon;

ſon; ſo that when my Body with its *Inſtincts* and *Motions*, joins with the right Judgments of my Mind, what I ſo perform has all the Perfection that an human Creature is able to exert.

This Complexion therefore, or bodily Diſpoſition towards charitable Acts, is ſo far from implying that therefore the Mind has no Share in the Action, that were the Mind in its beſt State, and in its full Power (as at firſt created) it would uſe a greater and more conſtant Concurrence of all bodily Tempers in the Performance of its Duty.

So that when Complexion, or bodily Temperament readily joins in the Performance of good Actions, this is ſo far from implying any Defect of Principle, or want of rational Motive, that it ſhows, in ſome degree, the Remains of that primitive Rectitude of Body and Mind before the *Fall*.

2*dly*, To ſay that *Philo's* Charity is mere Complexion, is a Calumny, and groundleſs Accuſation; it is a Suſpicion as illgrounded, as if I was to ſuſpect that a Man had no Pride in his Mind, becauſe there appeared an Haughtineſs in his Carriage; or no Humility within, becauſe of a natural Lowlineſs without: It is a Suſpicion thus founded againſt all the Appearances of Truth, and is forced

forced to make thoſe the Proofs of the Abſence of a Thing, which are the natural Signs of its Preſence.

And as it is thus ureaſonable, ſo is it utterly impoſſible that it ſhould ever juſtify itſelf.

For ſeeing it is not only poſſible, but natural for this complexional Diſpoſition to act in Conformity to the internal Principle of the Mind, it can never be proved that it does not.

It can never be proved, that Reaſon and Religion have not a greater Share in *Philo*'s Charity, than his Complexion. How far ſome Precept of Religion, ſome Principle of Reaſon may influence his Mind, cannot be known by the moſt ſagacious Philoſopher; therefore the Charge againſt his Charity, as the mere Effect of Complexion, muſt be always ill-natured, unjuſt, and groundleſs.

Further, granting that *Philo* was complexionally diſpoſed to Pity and Compaſſion, even before he could be ſuppoſed to act upon a Principle of Virtue and Religion, yet even this Suppoſition will make nothing againſt it afterwards.

For will any one argue, that a Man can never fear, love, or hate, upon Principles of Reaſon, becauſe Children fear, love, and hate, before Reaſon is of any Force to direct them?

Yet

Yet this is as wiſe, as to ſuppoſe that a Man's Complexion is never made to concur with a Principle of Reaſon, becauſe ſuch Complexion appeared, before Reaſon could be ſuppoſed of ſufficient Power to guide it.

As to what you ſay, "That *Pity is as much* "*a Frailty of our Nature*, as *Anger*, *Pride*, "&c. *That the weakeſt Minds have generally* "*the greateſt Share of it, for which Reaſon none* "*are more compaſſionate than Women and* "*Children* *."

Two Things may be obſerved. Firſt, The Inconſiſtency of this Aſſertion with the reſt of your Book.

Here you derive the Compaſſion of Women, from a ſuppoſed *Weakneſs of Mind*, which ſuppoſes, that their *Tempers* depend upon their Minds, and are ſubject to them, and influenced by them, though in this very Page, you make *Pity* to be only an *Impulſe of Nature*, and it is your chief Deſign throughout your Book to ſhow, that all our Tempers and Paſſions are mere Mechaniſm, and *Conſtitution*, founded only in the Temper and Tone of our bodily Spirits.

So that according to your deep Philoſophy, *Pity* is only an Impulſe of Nature, and bodily Temper; yet Women are more pitiful than Men, becauſe they have (as you ſuppoſe) *weaker Minds*. That

* p. 42.

That is, their Minds, becauſe *weak*, have a Power over their Tempers, and form their Diſpoſitions; but Mens Minds being *ſtrong*, have no ſuch Power.

To what Temper of Mind ſuch Philoſophy as this, is to be imputed, need not be obſerved.

2dly. To ſay that Women have the *weakeſt Minds*, is ſaying more than you are able to prove. If they are more inclined to Compaſſion, through a Tenderneſs of Nature, it is ſo far from being a *Weakneſs of their Minds*, that it is a right Judgment, aſſiſted, or made more eaſy, by a happy Tenderneſs of their Conſtitutions.

And it is owing, perhaps, to this *Make* of their Spirits, that they are commonly more affected with the Truths of Religion, than the Generality of Men are.

When our Minds are once ſoftened, by whateve Cauſe it is, we are generally in the beſt Diſpoſition for the Impreſſions of Religion; ſo that *Pity* is ſo far from being *as much a Frailty*, as *Pride* and *Anger*, that they are as different in their Effects, as a *Heart of Fleſh* and a *Heart of Stone*, which Holy Scripture makes as different as a *Bleſſing* and a *Curſe*.

But to return (if this be a Digreſſion) to my Subject.

Let us now further ſuppoſe, that *Philo*'s Charity is greatly owing to his Nature and Complexion; that the quality of his Spirits began the Diſpoſition, and helped to recommend this Virtue to the Mind; yet may ſuch a Virtue be as truly rational and religious, as if it had been let into the Mind any other way.

Sickneſs, *Poverty*, and *Diſtreſs*, have a natural Tendency to correct our Follies, and convert our Minds towards our true Good. Theſe Conditions of Life may make it as eaſy for a Man to be *humble* and *compaſſionate*, as any bodily Complexion whatever; yet are ſuch *Humility* and *Compaſſion* not to be eſteemed void of Principle or Reaſon, becauſe ſuch Cauſes contributed towards them, and led the Mind into them.

For the Mind is acting according to the trueſt Principles of Reaſon and Religion, when it makes Advantage of theſe external Helps, and turns *Eaſe* and *Pain*, *Sickneſs* and *Health*, into occaſional Cauſes of greater Piety.

Nor is it any more a Diminution of the Reality of *Philo*'s Charity, to ſay, that bodily Temper firſt prepared and inclined his Mind towards it, than it is a Diminution of the Reality of any one's *Repentance*, to ſay, that

it

it was ſome Misfortune or croſs Accident that firſt diſpoſed and fitted his Mind for it.

David ſaid (without fear of deſtroying the Reality of his Piety) *It is good for me, that I have been afflicted.*

Now if Actions, or Ways of Life may be good, though Afflictions contributed towards them, ſurely they may be equally good, though ſome Bodily Tempers proved in ſome degree the Occaſions of them,

And it is as conſiſtent with true and real Virtue, to owe its Riſe to ſome bodily Conſtitution or Temper, as it is conſiſtent with ſolid and ſubſtantial Piety, to owe its Beginning to ſome particular Calamity or Action of God's Providence.

But to proceed: It is further objected, that *Philo*'s Charity muſt be *mere Complexion*, and not Virtue; for if it were Virtue, he would not allow himſelf in the Neglect of other Duties.

This, again, is a falſe Concluſion; for a Man may perform one Duty upon a Principle of Virtue, and Senſe of Duty, and yet through Miſtake, or Negligence, be deficient in others.

Such great Judges of human Nature, ſhould conſider, that even in worldly Affairs, a Man does not always act up to the ſame Principle in every thing he does.

Will any one ſay, that *Avarus* does not conſider Gain, when he is making Bargains, becauſe at ſome other Times he ſeems not to value Expence?

If not, why then muſt *Philo* be looked upon as not *at all* influenced by a Senſe of Duty in his Acts of Charity, becauſe at ſome other Times and Occaſions, he ſeems not to be governed by it.

Our preſent State, is a State of great Weakneſs and Imperfection, and our Reaſon, weak as it is, has a Thouſand Impediments to hinder and divert its Force. In the Affairs of Civil Life, we are neither perfectly wiſe, nor wholly fooliſh; and we are almoſt the ſame Men in the Things that relate to God. In ſome Inſtances, Reaſon and Religion get more Power over us, and guide us under a Senſe of Duty; whilſt in other Parts of our Life, it may be very apparent, that Reaſon has a leſs Share in our Actions.

But to conclude that Reaſon, or a Principle of Virtue, does not influence us in any Part of our Behaviour, becauſe it does not act equally and conſtantly in every other Part of our Lives, is as abſurd, as to affirm, that we do not *think* at all in any Thing that we do, becauſe we do not *think* with the ſame Exactneſs or Attention in every Thing that is done by us.

If

If *Philo* lives in the Neglect or Violation of ſome Duties, this ſhows that he is a weak, imperfect Man; but it does not ſhow that he is the *ſame* weak and imperfect Man, and as devoid of any Principle of Virtue, when he does his Duty, as when he neglects it: For it is as poſſible for him to be charitable upon a Principle of Duty, and yet fail in ſome other Reſpects, as it is poſſible for a Man to uſe his Reaſon in ſome Things, and not in others; or to reaſon right in ſome Points, and yield to Folly in others.

So that to impute Actions ſeemingly virtuous, ſolely to natural *Temper* or *Complexion*, or ſome other blind Motive, becauſe the Man is not uniform in his Life, is groundleſs and abſurd; all that can with any Truth be affirmed of ſuch a Man, is this, that he is not uniform in his Actions, and that through ſome Miſtake, or Negligence, he is not ſo careful of his Duty in ſome Reſpects as in others.

Our *Underſtanding* and *Reaſon*, even in Matters of mere Speculation, are well nigh as weak and inconſtant, as in Points of Duty and Conſcience.

Few Syſtems of Philoſophy, but obtrude ſome Errors upon us with as much Aſſurance, as they affirm the Truth: *Deſcartes*

aſſerted a *Plenum*; Sir *Iſaac Newton* has proved a *Vacuum.*

Now will any one ſay, that it was not the *Reaſon* or *Underſtanding* of *Deſcartes* that demonſtrated ſo many ſolid Truths, becauſe he yielded to Falſity and Error in the Doctrine of a *Plenum?* Yet it would be much more reaſonable to affirm this, in Matters of mere Speculation, than to affirm, that in Points of Practice and Duty, a Man is *in no Actions* governed by *Reaſon* and *Principle*, becauſe in *ſome* Inſtances he acts weakly, and not according to Reaſon.

For, produce but the true Reaſon why a Philoſopher may be ſaid to proceed in ſome Speculations according to ſtrict Reaſon and Truth, and yet hold ſome Tenets contrary to them, and then you will ſhow that it is poſſible, nay, highly probable, that a Man may, in ſome Points of Duty, act upon a Principle of Reaſon and Virtue, though in ſome Things he may ſwerve from them.

There is, I acknowledge, a great Difference in bodily Temperaments, ſo that one Man may be born with better Diſpoſitions for the Practice of ſome Virtues than others, yet it is Reaſon within, that is the chief Principle that actuates all of them; for the *fineſt Spirits* are things as blind and ſenſeleſs

of

of themſelves, as the *Hands* and *Feet*, or the groſſer Parts of the Body.

Wit and *Underſtanding* depend much upon bodily Temperaments; yet who is ſo weak as to imagine, that therefore the Reaſon of the Mind has no Share in Arts and Sciences.

It is the ſame in *Virtue*, or at leaſt, as to ſome particular Virtues; there may be a kind Diſpoſition in the animal Spirits to produce them, but it is great Weakneſs to ſuppoſe that Reaſon and Judgment have no Part in them.

It is impoſſible for our ſtinted Capacities to explain or calculate the *exact* Powers, that are to be attributed to our Souls and Bodies in the performance of Actions, becauſe we have no clear ideas of them; but we know enough, to affirm the united Operation of both, and to ſhow that he reaſons falſely, who would aſcribe an Action wholly to the Body, becauſe it appears to have ſome Share in it; becauſe, ſuppoſing it to take its Riſe wholly from *Reaſon*, the Union of the Soul and Body requires, that the Body ſhould appear to have the ſame Part in the Production of the Action.

There are nothing more various, imperceptible, or more out of our Sight, than the

Motives of human Actions. We know no more how *Arguments* and *Opinions*, act upon the Mind, or how far they contribute to our *Choice*, than we can tell how far the *Air*, and how far the *Sun*, operates in the Growth of Plants.

When a Free-Thinker aſſerts, that our *religious Belief and Perſuaſions are not at all the Cauſes of human Actions*, he proceeds upon as good Grounds, as if he had ſaid, that *Air is not at all* the Cauſe of the Circulation of the Blood.

For it is as eaſy to ſhow that *Air* has no Influence upon our Bodies, as that *Reaſon* and *Opinions* have no Power over our Minds.

And it is more poſſible to tell how far the *Fluids*, and how far the *Solids* in an human Body, contribute to bodily Action, than it is to affirm how far *Opinions* and *Judgments*, and how far *Temper* and *Complexion*, operate in human Actions.

Nay, theſe Gentlemen themſelves, to make their Philoſophy ſtill more ridiculous, are frequently wondering at the ſtrange and monſtrous *Contradictions*, which they think they diſcover in human Nature.

As if they ſhould ſay, That finding human Nature to be *unaccountable*, they therefore take upon them to give *certain* and *poſitive* Accounts of its manner of acting.

I ſhall be pardoned for inſiſting ſo long upon this Article, becauſe it is that on which ſome celebrated *Wits* have ſpent ſo much Pains, to the Prejudice of Religion and Morality. It is not eaſy to imagine the fatal Effects that Mr. *Bayle*'s and *Eſprit*'s Writings have had upon People's Minds, by denying the Power of *Reaſon* and *Religion*, and aſcribing all human Actions to *Complexion*, *natural Temper*, &c.

It is an eaſy Thing to be a *Wit*, and a *Philoſopher*, if you will but write againſt Religion and Virtue; for I need not ſay all Arguments, but all Fancies, are admired as Demonſtrations on that Side; and the bolder Steps you take, the ſurer you are of being eſteemed a *Genius*.

Had Mr. *Bayle* filled his Books with the moſt uſeful, noble Truths, he had not had half ſo many Admirers, as for one ſingle Sentence, which the moſt thoughtleſs Rake might have ſaid through the mere Aſſurance of his own Extravagancies.

Speaking of *Fornication*, *I queſtion*, ſays he, *whether one Man in a Hundred is clear of the Guilt*.

Could he have ſaid a more extravagant Thing, that had reflected more upon Morality, and the Power of Religion, he had ſtill been

been more admired. It is thus that Mr. *Bayle* and *Eſprit* have purchaſed the Eſteem, and increaſed the Numbers, of Infidels and Libertines.

Theſe Gentlemen are dead, and their Aſhes ſafe, if the Death of Men implies no more than the Fall of Leaves.

What Reaſons you have to appear in the ſame Cauſe of Immorality, or what Security you have againſt the Power of God, is, I dare ſay, not known to yourſelf.

Infidelity and Irreligion have few Topicks for Reflection; they have not ſo much as one Argument on their Side.

You can no more ſhow that you are not immortal, than you can ſhow what was doing before the Creation of the World.

To fanſy that all expires with the Body, is as well ſupported, as if you was to fancy that there are no Beings but what are viſible to your Eyes. To ſuppoſe that Man will never be called to an Account, is as much to be depended upon, as if you ſuppoſed, that there will be nothing in Being a Thouſand Years hence.

Yet theſe are the *ſtrong Foundations* of Infidelity and Prophaneneſs; theſe are the *ſolid Principles* upon which great *Philoſophers* eſtabliſh deluded (or as they call themſelves) *Free-thinkers.*

A Revelation from God, that juſtifies itſelf from the Creation of the World; that tells you every Truth that a wiſe Man would be glad to hear; that is ſupported with all the Authority that an omnipotent God can give; that is confirmed with all the Aſſurance that human Teſtimony can afford; is of no Weight againſt a few bold Aſſertions of weak Mortals, who exceed thei Fellow-Creatures only in Arrogance and Preſumption.

SECT. III.

ONE would imagine, by what has already paſſed, that you had ſufficiently vented your Paſſion upon moral Virtue, and that you had hardly any more Arrows to draw againſt it; but you proceed to ſhow us, that however you may fail in Argument, you will never be wanting in Inclination to attack it.

You ſet your ſelf with an Air of Satisfaction, as if Morality and Religion lay at your Feet, *to examine into the* Pulchrum *and* Honeſtum *of the Antients*; that is, "*to in-*" *quire whether there be amy real Excellence or* "*Worth in Things, a Pre-eminence of one* "*Thing above another* *." And

* p. 373.

And to ſhow that there is no ſuch Thing as any real Worth or Excellence in Things or Actions, but that all is mere Whim and Fancy, you proceed thus:

" *In the Works of Nature, Worth and Excel-*
" *lence are as uncertain. How whimſical is*
" *the Floriſt! Sometimes the* Tulip, *ſometimes*
" *the* Auricula, *ſhall engroſs his Eſteem. What*
" *Mortal can decide which is the handſomeſt,*
" *abſtract from the Mode in being, to wear*
" *great Buttons, or ſmall ones* ?*

" *In Morals,* ſay you, *there is no greater*
" *Certainty ‡.*"

So that according to your Philoſophy, he who prefers Equity to Injuſtice, is but like him that chuſes a *great Button* rather than a *ſmall* one; and he who prefers Fidelity to Falſeneſs, as whimſical as the *Floriſt*, who admires the *Auricula* more than the *Tulip*.

Now if there be only this Difference between *Actions*, then there can be no greater Difference between *Agents*, the beſt of Men can only excel the vileſt of their Race, as a *Tulip* may excel an *Auricula*.

Nay, if Truth and Falſhood be no otherwiſe different from one another, than as one Button differs from another, then it muſt follow, that there can be no greater Difference between the Author of the one, and the Author of the other. Now,

* p. 377. ‡ p. 379.

Now, the Religion of our Country tells us, that God is *Truth*, and the Devil the Author of *Lies*.

This, Sir, you ſee is the direct, immediate Blaſphemy of your Notions, and not drawn from them by any diſtant or remote Conſequences.

And if I ſhould aſk you, why one ſhould be worſhipped rather than the other? I ſhould puzzle your profound Philoſophy, as much as if I aſked you which was the fineſt Flower? for you cannot tell me that one of theſe Beings is really good, and the other really evil, and yet maintain, that there is no real Goodneſs in Truth, nor any real Evil in Lies and Falſhood.

It is utterly impoſſible to anſwer this Queſtion, without giving up your *Uncertainty in Morals*, and allowing that there is ſomething certain and immutable in the Worth and Excellence of Things and Actions.

Should any one charge you with the groſſeſt Villanies, and moſt flagrant Immoralities that ever were committed by Man, you could have no more Pretence to be angry at the Imputation, than if he had ſaid, you was particularly fond of little Buttons.

To proceed: "*Which is the beſt Religion*, "ſay you, *is a Queſtion that has cauſed more* "*Miſchief, than all other Queſtions together**."

* P. 379.

Religion

Religion never comes in your way, but it puts you in a Paſſion; though I dare ſay, you never had any harm by it in your Life. This is a heavy Charge upon Religion, and upon the beſt Religion, for that is it which is inquired after. You charge a great deal of Miſchief to this Inquiry after the beſt Religion, on purpoſe to enhance, I ſuppoſe, your own Merit, that you may appear to do a more public Good, who endeavour to deſtroy the very Idea of it.

But as Miſchievous as you reckon this Inquiry to be, I am of another Opinion, taken from him who made the Inquiry neceſſary, who is God himſelf.

Thou ſhalt have no other God beſides me, was ſetting up the beſt Religion; and *thou ſhalt not make to thyſelf any graven Image*, &c. was a Determination againſt *Paganiſm*. Now I look upon the beſt Religion to be a Matter of great Moment, becauſe God has commanded it; and take the Inquiry after it to be well authorized, becauſe God has forbid all falſe Worſhip.

If you like it the worſe for having this Authority, and ſhould be better pleaſed with Religion, if it was ſome Politician's Invention, I ſhall only ſay, that you are fonder of Cheats than I am.

Again;

Again ; I do not allow myſelf to be angry at the Inquiry after the beſt Religion, becauſe I find that our bleſſed Saviour came into the World to teach Men the beſt Religion, and with the higheſt Rewards and Puniſhments to perſuade Men to ſeek after and embrace it. *This is Life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent.* And again, *Go ye and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt ; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the End of the World.*

This convinces me, that the Inquiry after the beſt Religion, is the nobleſt, the moſt happy and beneficial of all others, becauſe it is an Inquiry after eternal Happineſs : But ſince you take it to have done more Miſchief than all other Inquiries, you know now where to charge it, you know who it was that ſent Twelve Apoſtles, indued with reſiſtleſs Power, to perſuade all the Nations of the World to inquire after, and receive the one beſt Religion. " *Aſk it*, ſay you, *(i. e.* " which is the beſt Religion) *at* Peking, *at* " Conſtantinople, *at* Rome, *and you will re-* " *ceive three diſtinct Anſwers, extremely differ-* " *ent from one another, yet all of them equally* " *poſitive and peremptory. Chriſtians are well*

" *aſſured*

" *assured of the Falsity of the Pagan and Ma-*
" *hometan Superstitions ; but inquire of the*
" *several Sects they are divided into, which is*
" *the true Church of Christ ? and all of them*
" *will tell you it is theirs* *."

Then comes your Golden Conclusion. " *It is manifest, then, that the hunting after* " *this* Pulcrum *and* Honestum, *is not much* " *better than a wild Goose Chase*, &c."

Here I observe, that very consistently indeed with yourself, having rejected all moral Virtue, and natural Religion, you treat Revelation in the same manner. Christianity and Paganism are put upon the same Foot, and the Inquiry which is the best, esteemed no better than a *wild Goose Chase*, &c. Is this Declaration of yours the Effect of a serious Inquiry into the Merits of different Religions ? That cannot be, it reflects too much upon so fine an Understanding as yours, to suppose, that you could ever have been seriously *chasing of wild Geese*.

The Acuteness of your Parts, must have always prevented the Inquiry. You knew, I suppose *ab origine*, from your Cradle, that there was no God, or you could not have been always so clear about the Insignificance of any Religion ? For if there be a God, it is more than probable that he is to be worshiped,

* p. 379.

ed, and it is hardly to be ſuppoſed that all Ways of Worſhip are equally acceptable to him.

You repreſent the Inquiry after the beſt Religion, as a mere *wild Gooſe Chaſe*, becauſe, if the Queſtion is put at *Peking*, *Conſtantinople*, or amongſt the various Sects of Chriſtians, all of them claim the only true Worſhip.

Now, Sir, I will remove rhe Queſtion from the Diſciples and Followers, to the *Authors* of theſe Religions. You ſhall put the Queſtion thus, Ask *Jeſus*, ask *Mahomet*, ask ſome *Pagan* Impoſtor, and you will receive three diſtinct Anſwers, extremely different from one another, and yet equally poſitive and peremptory.

Will you ſtand to your Concluſion here, that therefore it is Madneſs to concern ourſelves more about the one than the other?

Is there any Creature ſo abſurd, as to think this an Argument againſt *Chriſt*, or that the Inquiry after Him is Folly, becauſe there was one *Mahomet* called for Diſciples?

Yet the Argument is full as juſt and cogent againſt Chriſt himſelf, as againſt the Religion which he has inſtituted; for if the Religion of *Chriſt* and that of *Mahomet* have nothing to diſtinguiſh them, and Chriſtiani-

ty is to be ridiculed and deſpiſed, becauſe there is ſuch a Religion as *Mahometaniſm*, then it undeniably follows, that Chriſt, when on Earth, might be juſtly rejected, becauſe there have been other Perſons who have pretended to come from God.

This Argument of yours (if it proves any thing) proves it impoſſible that there ever ſhould be any Revelation or Religion from God, which Mankind would be obliged to receive, ſo long as there were either wicked Spirits, or wicked Men in the World. For evil Spirits and evil Men will have evil Deſigns, and will oppoſe the Wiſdom and Providence of God, in ſetting up Ways of Religion ſuitable to their own Tempers and Deſigns. But according to your Argument, no Religion has any Pretence to our Regard, when once it is oppoſed; nor need we trouble our Heads about the Truth of any, becauſe there is more than one that lays Claim to it; which is as good Senſe, as if you was to affirm, that a *Lie* was a Demonſtration, that there was no ſuch thing as *Truth*.

Whereas, the very Poſſibility of a falſe Religion, implies the Poſſibility of a true one, as much as Falſhood implies the Poſſibility of Truth, or Wrong ſuppoſes Right.

The

The wiſeſt Speech therefore that you can make to your ſagacious Followers, is this:

" Gentlemen, I would not have you to " eat or drink, becauſe *Phyſicians* differ very " much about Diet, and Poiſons are gene- " rally conveyed that way; nor would I " have you take any Money, becauſe there " is counterfeit Coin in the World.

" There are a great many falſe Accounts " of Things, therefore you need not, nay, " ought not to trouble yourſelves about any " that are true.

" You may laugh at *David*, when he " ſays, *the Heavens declare the Glory of God,* " *and the Firmament ſhoweth his handy-work*; " becauſe there is a contrary Opinion; *a Fool* " *that hath ſaid in his Heart there is no God.*

" You need not regard Chriſtianity, or its " divine Inſtitution, becauſe there are other " Religions at *Peking* and *Conſtantinople*; " nor need you worſhip the true God, be- " cauſe in *Egypt* they worſhipped *Leeks* and " *Onions:* Nay, you need not hold that " there is any true God, becauſe there are " People who have invented falſe Deities.

" When any Hiſtory is urged upon you, " you may anſwer, That of *Robinſon Cruſoe* " is called a *true* Account; or if any one pre- " tends to be *poſitive* on the ſide of Virtue,

" you may confute his Arrogance, by ſay-
" ing, It can never be proved that the *Auri-*
" *cula* exceeds the *Tulip*.

" Theſe are ſtrong and ſhort Maxims,
" which will ſupport you againſt the Wiſ-
" dom of all Ages; they confute whole
" Volumes of *Prophets* and *Apoſtles* with a
" Word ſpeaking.

" Theſe are Doctrines that require no
" Study or Application, and you may believe
" them to be proper, by their Fitneſs for uſe.
" You may drink, debauch, eat, and ſleep
" as you pleaſe, without hindering your
" Progreſs in theſe Doctrines. Luxury, and
" Wantonneſs will improve your Readineſs;
" and your very Dulneſs will make you
" more accute.

" Nay, the more you ſink into Senſuality
" and the animal Life, the more you will
" feel and reliſh the Truth of theſe Senti-
" ments. Though you are to fly from all
" Appearance of Truth, and avoid all Con-
" cern about any Religion, as you would
" avoid the Folly of *chaſing of wild Geeſe*,
" yet you muſt remember, that you are my
" Scholars: For I am an *Abſtract-Thinker*,
" and in theſe my abſtract Speculations, you
" muſt be my diligent and dutiful Scholars.
" Though Chriſtianity may be deſpiſed, be-

" cauſe

" cauſe other Religions are ſet up againſt it,
" yet you muſt value me the more, for be-
" ing contrary to the wiſeſt Men of all Ages
" in the World.

" Though there is nothing certain or va-
" luable in religious Truths, though moral
" Virtue is the *Offspring* of Pride, the *Inven-*
" *tion* of Philoſophers, and all mere Whim
" and Fancy; yet my Speculations having
" the utmoſt Contrariety to all that is virtuous,
" moral, or religious, you may ſafely put
" your whole Truſt and Confidence in them."

This is the beſt Speech that you can poſ-ſibly make to your deluded Followers; and I dare ſay, if your Principles would allow of greater Stupidity or Dullneſs, you would not be without a Party, who, to avoid Sal-vation, would join with an Enemy to Vir-tue, merely for the Sake of his Cauſe.

The Infidelity of the preſent Age is very great, and ſhows ſuch a Contempt of ſacred Things, as was hardly ever heard of before.

If one inquires into the Grounds of it, it ſeeems founded on ſuch an implicit Faith re-poſed in Men of wanton and ſenſual Minds, as is looked upon to be mean and ſlaviſh, when yielded to the higheſt Evidence in Matters of the laſt Moment.

To

To believe *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, is ridiculed, becauſe it is *believeing*; but to be a Slave to a wanton Infidel, and blindly ſwear into his Opinions, is glorious and manly, becauſe it is *Free-thinking*.

Deiſts and *Free-thinkers* are generally conſidered as *Unbelievers*; but upon Examination, they will appear to be Men of the moſt reſigned and implicit Faith in the World; they would believe *Tranſubſtantiation*, but that it implies a believing in God; for they never reſign their Reaſon, but when it is to yield to ſomething that oppoſes Salvation.

For the *Deiſt's* Creed has as many Articles as the *Chriſtian's*, and requires a much greater Suſpenſion of our Reaſon to believe them. So that if to believe Things upon no Authority, or without any Reaſon, be an Argument of Credulity, the *Free-thinker* will appear to be the moſt eaſy, credulous Creature alive. In the firſt place, he is to believe almoſt all the ſame Articles to be falſe, which the Chriſtian believes to be true.

Now, it may eaſily be ſhown, that it requires ſtronger Acts of Faith to believe theſe Articles to be falſe, than to believe them to be true.

For, taking Faith to be an Aſſent of the Mind to ſome Propoſition, of which we

have

have no certain Knowledge, it will appear that the Deiſt's Faith is much ſtronger, and has more of Credulity in it than the Chriſtian's. For inſtance, the Chriſtian believes the *Reſurrection* of the Dead, becauſe he finds it ſupported by ſuch Evidence and Authority, as cannot poſſibly be higher, ſuppoſing the Thing was true; and he does no more Violence to his Reaſon in believing it, than in ſuppoſing that God may intend to do ſome Things, which the Reaſon of Man cannot conceive how they will be effected.

On the contrary, the *Deiſt believes* there will be no Reſurrection. And how great is his Faith! for he pretends to no Evidence or Authority to ſupport it; it is a pure, naked Aſſent of his Mind to what he does not know to be true, and of which no Body has, or can give him any full Aſſurance.

So that the Difference between a *Chriſtian* and a *Deiſt*, does not conſiſt in this, that the one aſſents to Things unknown, and the other does not; but in this, that the Chriſtian aſſents to Things unknown, on the account of Evidence; the other aſſents to Things unknown, without any Evidence at all.

Which ſhows, that the *Chriſtian* is the rational Believer, and the *Deiſt* the blind Bigot.

Aſk a *Deiſt* or a *Free-thinker*, why he believes Chriſtianity to be an Impoſture, you muſt not expect to have any Arguments offered you; but however, all Arguments aſide, he can tell you, that the Inquiry after the beſt Religion has done *more Miſchief*, than all other Inquiries together; that it is, at beſt, but a *wild Gooſe Chaſe*; he will tell you how *Jeſus* has been called the *Galilean* by way of Contempt; that there are various Readings in the Scriptures; that Mr. *Whiſton* is the moſt learned and ſincere Divine of the Age; that he has called the preſent Doctrine of the Trinity an *Apoſtaſy*; and ſays, that the preſent Text of the *Old Teſtament*, is not that which was uſed in our Saviour's Time: He may, perhaps, crack a Jeſt upon ſome Text of the New Teſtament, and tell you how ſuch a one uſed to ſay, that *working a Miracle, was like ſhowing a Trick.*

If you have Strength enough to maintain your Ground againſt ſuch Attacks as theſe, the *Deiſts* can get no Power over you: But it muſt be confeſſed, that idle and fooliſh as theſe Arts appear in Point of Reaſon, yet they are very fatal in their Effects upon the Minds of Men.

Religion requires a ſerious and wiſe Uſe of our Reaſon, and can only recommend itſelf

ſelf to us, when we are in a Diſpoſition to reaſon and think ſoberly; it preſerves its Power over our Minds no longer, than whilſt we conſider it as the moſt ſerious, important, and ſacred Thing in the World.

Hence it appears, why we are generally ſo little affected with Religion, becauſe we are ſeldom in a State of ſober thinking. The Concerns of the World keep our Spirits in a conſtant Hurry, and prevent our judging rightly of thoſe Things, which are not to be judged of, but by cool Reaſon.

Every one knows, that Sickneſs, Adverſity, and the Approach of Death, are advantageous Seaſons for the Truths of Religion to affect us; whereas they carry no other Advantage, than as they bring a Man into ſuch a State, as diſpoſes him to think ſeriouſly. For this Reaſon, they who only *laugh* at Religion, may be ſaid to have uſed the ſtrongeſt Argument againſt it, for there is no coming at it any other Way; it is only to be attacked by little Jeſts, lewd flings of Wit, ſuch as may betray the Mind into Levity, and corrupt the Imagination, which ſo far as it is effected, ſo far is the Power of Religion leſſened.

It is not the Deiſt's Buſineſs to reaſon ſoberly, and conſider the Weight and Moment

ment of Things with Exactneſs; for, to reaſon ſoberly, is to act againſt himſelf, and put his Reader into that State of Mind, in which Religion has its chief Force.

But idle Stories about Gods and Goddeſſes, and pagan Myſteries, ſawcy Jeſts, lewd Innuendo's, and Nick-names given to ſerious Things, ſerve the Cauſe of Infidelity, much better, than any Arguments it has yet found out.

For theſe not only ſerve to confound and diſtract the Mind, and leſſen the Difference of Things, but they alſo gratify and engage the moſt immoral and wicked Men, as they furniſh them with a Confutation of Religion at ſo cheap a Rate.

How many fine Gentlemen muſt have been forced to have owned themſelves Chriſtians, had not ſuch ſhort Confutations of Chriſtianity been provided to their Hands! But as the Cauſe is now managed, no one can be too dull, ſenſeleſs, or debauched, to be a powerful Deiſt; a poor inflamed Wretch, who never had the Uſe of his Reaſon in his Life, may eaſily call Religion a *Dulcinea del Toboſa*, and all who would procure any regard to it, *Saint Errants*; and when he has done this, he may reckon himſelf a *great Genius*, and to have ſhown as much Learning

ing in favour of Deiſm, as the firſt Rate Infidel of the Age.

How many lively *Beaux* had buried their Parts in Swearing and Obſcenity, had not all Jeſts upon Scripture been allowed as true Proofs of *Deiſm* and Politeneſs!

And though the *Fraternity* now boaſts of its Numbers (as every Vice if it could ſpeak might do the ſame) yet, if no one was to be allowed to be a *Deiſt*, till he had examined the Truths and Authority of Religion, as he would examine the *Title* to an Eſtate, even the preſent Age, would be able to ſhow more *Squarers* of the Circle, or *Diſcoverers* of the Longitude, than *Profeſſors* of Deiſm.

Nay, was one to aſk the moſt philoſophical amongſt them, to ſhow the *great Danger* of being a good Chriſtian, or the fatal Conſequences of living in Expectation of the *Reſurrection*, and *Judgment* to come; was he aſked to ſhow the certain Safety of *Infidelity*, or why an Infidel can be no Sufferer for rejecting the Offers of the Goſpel; he could give you as plain an Anſwer, as if you had aſked what State this *Globe* of Earth will be in, five thouſand Years hence.

But indeed, it ſeems needleſs to obſerve, that Prudence and common Senſe have no Hand in Infidelity. Self-murder does not more

more directly prove Lunacy, than Infidelity proves the loſs of Reaſon.

There is no one that ſeems more to depend upon the Folly and Madneſs of his Readers, than you do.

You tell them, that you are a *mere Animal* governed by Appetites over which you have no Power; that is, you deſcribe yourſelf as a *Machine* that would look well in a *Bridle*, and then pretend to talk of God, and Providence, and Religion, and Morality, and to pierce into the inmoſt nature of Things and Actions, with as much Eaſe, as if you was ſome ſuperior Form, that was made up of pure Wiſdom and Intelligence.

But the thing is, you knew what ſide you had choſen, and that if you was not wanting in Impiety, Lewdneſs, and Reproaches upon Virtue, you might abound in Nonſenſe as much as you pleaſed.

And indeed it muſt be confeſſed, that as hardly any Authority is ſufficient to recommend a Perſon, that comes from God, to do us good; ſo is there ſcarce any Folly great enough to expoſe another, that comes a Miſſioner from the Kingdom of Darkneſs to do us Harm.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

YOU are at laſt ſo ſenſible of the Abilities, which you have diſcovered, in laying open the Myſteries of human Nature, that you think it but a neceſſary peice of Civility, to make an Apology to the World, for ſhowing ſuch a ſuperior Knowledge.

Thus ſay you, "*What Hurt do I do to* "*Man, if I make him more known to himſelf* "*than he was before?*"

"*But we are ſo deſperately in Love with* "*Flattery, that we can never reliſh a Truth* "*that is mortifying.*"

To prove the Juſtice of this Remark, you ſay, "*I do not believe the Immortality of the* "*Soul would even have found ſo general a Re-* "*ception in humam Capacities as it has, had it* "*not been a pleaſing one, that extolled and was* "*a Compliment to the whole Species**."

This Remark ſuppoſes that the *Mortality* of the Soul is a *Truth*, for you make our not believing it to be Mortal, a Proof that we connot reliſh a Truth that is mortifying. You alſo impute our Opinion of the Soul's Immortality, to a *deſperate love of Flattery*; which

* p. 256.

which is giving it as ſure a Mark of an Error, as you could well have thought of.

The reaſonableneſs of this Remark, is founded upon that Advantage and Dignity which ariſe from Immortality; this is what induces you to think that its Reception in human Capacities is owing to a love of Flattery.

You might have made the ſame Remark upon the *Belief* of the *Being* and Providence of God, that they had never had ſo general a Reception in human Capacities, were not Men deſperately *in love with Flattery, and not able to reliſh a Truth that is mortifying.*

For the the *Being* and *Providence* of God, are the moſt pleaſing *Truths*, and more extol and elevate Man's Nature and Condition, than any thing elſe; and whilſt we aſſert the Providence of God, we aſſert our own Happineſs, as being the Care and Concern of ſo great and glorious a Nature.

But how ought that Man to be treated, who ſhould bring the *Belief* of a Divine Being as an Inſtance of the Power of Flattery over human Nature, or alledge the Doctrine of Providence as a Proof, that we cannot reliſh a Truth that is mortifying.

Yet

Yet this would be as well, as to inſtance, as you have done, in the Immortality of the Soul. For it is as reaſonable to rejoice in the Immorality of our Souls, as in the Being of God; and it is as impious to ſay, that we hold its Immortality, becauſe we cannot reliſh a Truth that is mortifying, as to ſay that we believe the Providence of God for the ſame Reaſon.

What an Averſion muſt you have to the Force of this Principle, that when you was to ſhow, that we cannot reliſh a *Truth* that is mortifying, you could like no Inſtance ſo well, as the general diſbelief of the Soul's Mortality? Can it be ſuppoſed that you would have inſtanced in this Opinion, if you had not wiſhed, that it ſhould loſe its Force upon Mens Minds, and be no longer conſidered as the corner Stone of Religion, but as a *Notion* founded in the Falſeneſs, Pride, and Flattery of Man's Nature?

Was any one ever ſo angry as the *Macedonian* Hero's Vanity of being a God, need he have reproached him more, than by imputing it to a *deſperate love of Flattery?*

Yet this is the tender Method, in which you have choſe to expoſe the Belief of the Soul's Immortality, as owing to a deſperate love of Flattery.

You

You will perhaps ſay, *Have I denied the Soul's Immortality?*

In expreſs Terms you have not denied it; ſuch a flat denial would have ſignified much leſs than what you have ſaid.

You knew very well, that to impute the Belief of it to Falſeneſs and Flattery, was the beſt Way of denying it.

It is rejected here in a manner that highly ſuits the Temper of Irreligion, by being conſidered not only as falſe, but as ariſing from the baſeſt Qualities of human Nature, *Pride* and a *deſperate* Love of *Flattery*.

Theſe Things ſerve not only to raiſe a Diſbelief, but to excite an Indignation againſt a Principle owing to ſuch reproachful Cauſes; and what is ſtill a greater Point gained, they teach People to look with Contempt and Diſlike on thoſe Perſons and that Religion, which teach ſuch a Principle.

Our bleſſed Saviour ſaith, *I am the Reſurrection and the Life, he that believeth in me ſhall never die.*

Now, according to your Philoſophy, this Speech of our Saviour's, muſt be reckoned an artful Application to the Weakneſs and Vanity of Human Nature, an Addreſs to the blind Side of Man, to increaſe his Love of

Flattery,

Flattery, and keep him from a true Knowledge of himſelf.

For if Man believes the Immortality of his Soul, through a deſperate Love of Flattery, certainly he who comes to encourage and eſtabliſh ſuch a Belief, comes to encourage and eſtabliſh that immoderate Love of Flattery.

Nay, this Doctrine of yours, not only ſerves to expoſe the Opinion of the Immortality of the Soul, and reproaches the Chriſtian Religion which teaches it, but it prepares a Man to be Proof againſt all Doctrines of Religion that have any Happineſs in them; for whatever is believed or practiſed that tends any way to raiſe or exalt the Condition of Man, is equally ſubject to this Reproach, that it is *received* through an exceſſive Fondneſs of Flattery.

So that your wiſe Philoſophy comes to this, that if there was no Honour or Happineſs in Religion, no Greatneſs to be acquired by our obeying God, it could not be charged upon our Pride and Vanity; but ſince Religion is in order to Happineſs, and ſince our worſhipping of God, implies our having a great and glorious Friend and Benefactor, ſuch a Religion may be owing to a Vice of our Nature, a *deſperate Love of Flattery*.

And the ſame may be ſaid of every virtuous Action, that it is practiſed through a deſperate Love of Flattery, in as much as Virtue is ſuppoſed to make us Friends and Favourites of God, and ſo dignifies and exalts our State.

Nay, this way of arguing proves, that the greater and more glorious the Idea is, which we form of God, the more we may be influenced by an ill Motive; for the greater and more glorious we repreſent the Nature of God, the more we raiſe and dignify ourſelves, who are related to ſo great a Being, and are in Covenant with him.

So that to clear ourſelves of a deſperate Love of Flattery, and to ſhow that we can reliſh Truths that are mortifying, we ſhould conceive very low and mean Notions of God, and ſuch as would make it neither our Honour nor Happineſs to worſhip him.

Such a Religion as this, that had nothing in it worthy of God or Men, might, according to your Account, be owing to ſome rational Principle, and not capable of being imputed to the Pride or Vanity of Man's Nature.

For ſince you impute the Belief of the Soul's Immortality, to a deſperate Love of Flattery, becauſe ſuch Belief ſets us out to

great

great Advantage, and adds Dignity to our Nature, the ſame Imputation is equally chargeble upon every Doctrine, or Practice, that promiſes any Happineſs or Honour to us; and no Religion or Opinions can be free from that Charge, but ſuch as are of no Benefit or Advantage to us.

From this therefore we may believe, that had we a Religion which propoſed nothing worthy of God, or beneficial to Man, the *Deiſts* and Wits of your Size, would all of them turn *Prieſts*, and devoutly wait at its *Altars*.

To ſpeak now a Word or two concerning *Pride*.

Pride is an Error or a Vice, as *Covetouſneſs* is a Vice; it is a notable Deſire, ill directed: It is a right Deſire, earneſtly to deſire Happineſs; but that Deſire is ſinful, when it is wholly ſet upon *Gold*, or any other *falſe* Good.

So a Deſire of Greatneſs is an excellent Deſire, a right Turn of Mind; but when it fixes upon a falſe Honour, it is a vitious Irregularity. To deſire the higheſt Exaltation of which our Nature is capable, is as right a Diſpoſition, as to deſire to be as like to God as we can.

Now, had you ſaid that the Belief of the Soul's Immortality, was aſſiſted and ſtrengthned in us through a Deſire of Greatneſs, you had ſaid as reaſonable a Thing, as to ſay, that Chriſtianity makes a ſtronger Impreſſion upon the Minds of Men through a Deſire of Happineſs.

For had we not theſe Diſpoſitions, neither Religion, nor any thing elſe that was of any Advantage to us, could take any hold of us: For, what would the Happineſs or Greatneſs of any Propoſal ſignify to Beings, whoſe Natures were not affected with them?

Now, to ſay that Religion is better received through this Tendency of our Nature, is no more a Reproach, than it is to ſay that our Underſtanding and Reaſon recommend Religion to us.

For theſe Diſpoſitions or Inclinations conſtitute the Excellence of our Nature, and give us all the Dignity that we have.

It being as right a Judgment of the Mind, to deſire to be as like to God as our Natures will allow, as it is to prefer Truth to Falſhood.

But to impute our Belief of the Immortality of the Soul to *Pride*, is as ridiculous, as to impute our Deſire of eternal Happineſs to *Avarice*.

For *Pride*, conſidered as a Vice, is no more the Cauſe of our Approbation of Immortality

mortality, than *Avarice* is the Cauſe of our ſetting our Affection on Things above.

Pride is as earthly and down-looking a Vice as Covetouſneſs, and as truly ſinks the Soul into a State of Meanneſs.

A Delight in falſe Honour as much debaſes and hinders the Mind from aſpiring after its true Greatneſs, as a Fondneſs for empty Riches keeps the Soul averſe from the Approbation of her true Good. That this is the Effect of Pride, that it debaſes the Mind, and makes it unable to reliſh its true Greatneſs, that it unfits it for the Reception of Doctrines which exalt and raiſe our Nature, may be alſo learnt from Him, who came to lead us unto all Truth.

Speaking of vain-glorious Men, ſays our bleſſed Saviour, *How can ye believe, which receive Honour one of another, and ſeek not that Honour, which cometh from God alone* *?

But you make the Pride of Man, the Cauſe of his believing divine Truths, though they are as oppoſite to one another, as Avarice and Heavenly-mindedneſs, Light and Darkneſs.

To make ſome Apology for yourſelf, you ſay, "*What Hurt do I do to a Man, if I make him* "*more known to himſelf than he was before?*"

You ſhould have put the Queſtion thus: What Hurt do I do to a Man, if I make

* St. John, v. 44.

him more vicious than he was before, if I deprave his Underſtanding, and lead him into a Contempt and Diſlike of the ſtrongeſt Principles of Religion?

For if there is any Danger either to yourſelf or others, in corrupting their Minds, and deſtroying the Motives to Religion and Virtue, you are capable of no other Apology, but what that Being may make, *who goeth about as a roaring Lion, ſeeking whom he may devour.*

The *Arrow that flieth by Day*, and the *Peſtilence that walketh in Darkneſs*, are mere Bleſſings, if compared to the Man who infuſes vicious Opinions into the Mind, which weaken the Power of Religion, and make Men leſs devoted to the Worſhip and Service of God.

How can you ſay, that you have only made Man more known to himſelf, by teaching him that the general Belief of the Soul's Immortality, is owing to a deſperate Love of Flattery?

Have you proved, that he does not know himſelf, if he thinks it is owing to any other Cauſe? Have you ſo much as attempted to ſhow, that it can have no other Foundation? That it is not founded in Reaſon, Religion, and the Attributes of God?

But

But proving (I recollect) is no Talent of yours; and if you may be allowed to *ſhine* in any thing, it is in looſe Inſinuations, poſitive Aſſertions, and vain Conjectures.

SECT. V.

YOU come now to give us a Taſte of your Skill in *Phraſeology*, or the Force and Propriety of Words. All ſorts of Learning ſeem to be at your Service, and you are ſo conſtant to yourſelf, as to make them all conſpire in one and the ſame Deſign againſt Religion.

Hope, being a Word of great Conſolation in the Chriſtian Religion, you have pitched upon that, as moſt deſerving the kind Aſſiſtance of your learned Hand.

" *All Hope*, ſay you, *includes Doubt*; *a ſil-*
" *ver Inkhorn may paſs in Speech, becauſe eve-*
" *ry Body knows what we mean by it*; *but a*
" *certain Hope cannot*; *the Epithet deſtroys the*
" *Eſſence of the Subſtantive*; *it is palpable*
" *Nonſenſe. The Reaſon therefore why it is not*
" *ſo ſhocking to ſome, to hear a Man ſpeak of*
" certain Hope, *as if he ſhould talk of* hot Ice,
" *or* liquid Oak, *is not becauſe there is leſs Non-*
" *ſenſe contained in the firſt*, than in either of

" the *latter, but becauſe the Word* Hope, I " mean the *Eſſence* of *it, is not ſo clearly under-* " *ſtood by the Generality of the People, as the* " *Words and Eſſences of* Ice *and* Oak *are* *."

What a Triumph is here over Religion! And with how much Eaſe do you reject an Article of Faith with a *Noun Subſtantive!*

In our *Burial* Service we have theſe Words, *In ſure and certain Hope of a Reſurrection*, &c.

This it ſeems cannot paſs in Speech, without the Deſtruction of a *Subſtantive*; *it is ſhocking, and palpable Nonſenſe.*

Let it firſt be obſerved, that *Hope* implies the *Belief, Dependence, or Expectation* of ſomething that ſhall come to paſs. Now I ſhould think that a Thing may as well be expected with Certainty, as Uncertainty; and that its being certain to happen, is no Inconſiſtency in the Expreſſion. It can hardly be denied, but that a Man may be certain that ſome Things will never happen; and where is the Contradiction of ſuppoſing him as certain that ſome Things will happen?

But to come to your own Arguments.

All Hope, ſay you, *includes Doubt.* This as much contradicts my Underſtanding, as if you had ſaid, that *all Truſt* includes *Diffidence*; and I cannot truſt a Man, unleſs I diſtruſt him. The Apoſtle ſays, *By Hope we*

* P. 149.

we are ſaved; according to you, he muſt mean, by *Doubting* we are ſaved; for if *Hope* neceſſarily includes *Doubting*, and *Hope* be neceſſary to Salvation, it evidently follows, that *Doubting* is neceſſary to Salvation; and every Exortation to *hope* in God, is an Exortation to *doubt* of God.

Our bleſſed Saviour ſaid, *If ye have Faith, and doubt not*, &c. Now had you been preſent at this ſaying, you could have ſhown the Impoſſibility of what he exhorted them to; that *Faith* or *Hope* implied *Doubting*; and that to talk of *certain Hope* or *Faith*, was as ſhocking to a fine Underſtanding, as to talk of *hot Ice*, or *liquid Oak*.

Certain Hope, you ſay, is *palpable Nonſenſe*, becauſe the *Epithet* deſtroys the Eſſence of the *Subſtantive*.

So that *Doubting* is the Eſſence of *Hope*, and conſequently whatever elſe belongs to Hope, is only *accidental*; the Eſſence of Hope is Doubting.

Now if Doubting is the Eſſence of Hope, then where there is the moſt Doubting, there muſt be the moſt of Hope; for where there is moſt of the Eſſence of a Thing, there muſt neceſſarily be moſt of the Thing itſelf.

Now it ſeems to me as ridiculous, to make *Doubting* the Eſſence of *Hope*, as to make

Fear

Fear the Eſſence of *Courage*. For Hope, ſo far as it goes, as much excludes Doubting, as Courage, ſo far as it extends, baniſhes Fear. There may be a weak Hope which is mixed with Doubt, as there may be a half Courage that is attended with Fear, but a thorough Hope as truly rejects Doubt, as a perfect Courage ſhakes off all Fear. And it is juſt ſuch *ſhocking Nonſenſe* to talk of a *certain Hope*, as to ſpeak of a *fearleſs Courage*: And there is juſt as much Murder of the *Subſtantive* in one Caſe, as the other.

Hope, or Expectation, does not imply *Uncertainty*, but *Futurity*, that the things expected, are not in being, but are to come to paſs; this is all that is of the Eſſence of Hope; it is only the *Futurity* of things that makes it.

Let the things come to paſs, and the Hope ceaſes, this is the only way of deſtroying it. But whether the things to come be with Certainty, or Uncertainty expected, no more deſtroys that Diſpoſition of Mind, which is called Hope, than the Paſſion of *Fear* is deſtroyed, by exerting itſelf reaſonably, or unreaſonably.

Hope is uncertain, not becauſe we cannot hope or expect with Certainty, but becauſe the things we hope for are generally not in

our

our Power, ſo as we can be ſecure of the Event.

But you ridiculouſly ſuppoſe, that Hope, or Expectation, as a Faculty of the Mind, neceſſarily includes Uncertainty, as if a Man cannot expect or hope for that, which he is ſure will anſwer his Expectation; or that he muſt ceaſe to expect things, becauſe he has certain grounds to expect them. Theſe are the Abſurdities which you plunge into, rather than allow a *certain* Hope of the *Reſurrection* of the Dead.

Hope is as the things hoped for. In uncertain things it is uncertain. But if God is pleaſed to inform us of things to come, we are with *certain Hope* and Expectation to depend upon them.

Agreable to this, St. *Paul* ſays, *In hope of eternal Life, which God, that cannot lye, promiſed before the World began.*

Here we have an Apoſtle's Authority for a *certain Hope*, made as undeniable as the Veracity of God.

But this muſt be very ſhocking to a Gentleman of your refined Underſtanding; and muſt give you a farther uneaſineſs, to behold the Deſtruction of a whole Noun *Subſtantive*, to eſtabliſh only an Article of Religion.

You compare *certain Hope*, to *hot Ice*, or *liquid Oak*, and ſay that the Expreſſions would

would be equally *ſhocking*, were the Nature of *Hope* as well underſtood, as the Nature of *Ice* and *Oak*.

Had you not been uſed to underſtand every thing wrong, you had never made this Obſervation; for the contrary to this happens to be true, that the Expreſſion is not ſo ſhocking in one Caſe as the other, becauſe the Nature of Hope is as well underſtood, as that of *Ice*, &c.

It is not ſhocking to ſay *certain Hope*, becauſe Hope is known to be founded upon ſome degrees of Aſſurance.

But does *Ice* ſuppoſe ſome degrees of Heat in order to its Exiſtence? Is *Ice* hotter or colder, as Hope is more or leſs aſſured? Hope is ſtronger and better, the *more* it has of Aſſurance, and the *leſs* it is oppoſed with Doubts; but is *Ice* the ſtronger and harder, the *more* it has of Heat, or the *leſs* it is ſurrounded with Cold?

Your Compariſon alſo of *certain Hope*, to *liquid Oak*, is equally ingenious and worthy of yourſelf; for it ſuppoſes that an *Oak* changes from *ſolid* to *liquid*, as *Hope* fluctuates from *Doubts* to *Belief*. For were not an *Oak* as various in its Nature, as to *liquid* and *ſolid*, as *Hope* is various in its Nature, as to *Doubt* and *Aſſurance*, it muſt be *ſhocking* Nonſenſe,

Nonſenſe, to make a *liquid Oak* the ſame thing as an *aſſured Hope*.

I have been the longer upon this Point, becauſe it is levelled at the very Foundation of our Religion, and would teach People to doubt of its greateſt Articles, through the mere force of a Word or two, and for the ſake of a Noun *Subſtantive*.

SECT. VI.

I HAD now taken my Leave of you, if the Letter you publiſhed in the *London Journal*, in defence of your Book, had not been juſt put into my Hands.

Having ſeen your Talent at Apology, I expected no great Matter from you in that Way; but however I am now convinced, that your Book gives us but a ſmall Eſſay of your Abilities, and that you can exceed it as much as you pleaſe.

For who would imagine that the Author of ſo poor a Rhapſody, could produce ſuch maſterly Strokes as theſe in the Defence of it.

" *My Vanity*, ſay you, *I never could conquer*, " *ſo well as I could wiſh, and I am too proud to* " *commit Crimes.*"

Surely no one after this will venture to lay any thing to your Charge, ſince great muſt

be

be your Innocence, if Pride be the Guardian of it.

But if any one ſhould chance to humble you, you muſt then fall into a defenſeleſs State. But if you are not to be proved guilty, till you can be ſhown to be deficient in Pride, it may require ſome time to effect it.

Since you ground your Vindication ſo much upon your Pride, it may not be amiſs to recollect the Definition you have given us of it in your own Book. "*Pride*, ſay you, "*is that natural Faculty, by which every Mor-*"*tal, that has any Underſtanding, overvalues*"*and imagines better things of himſelf, than*"*any impartial Judge, thoroughly acquainted*"*with all his Qualities* and *Circumſtances*,"*would allow him* *."

A pretty Qualification indeed, for a Man to found his Innocence upon! Yet you (with a more than ordinary Brightneſs) own that you are governed by this *Vice*, to prove yourſelf to be *Faultleſs*.

Should a *blind* Man who had loſt his Way, alledge his *Blindneſs*, as a Proof that he could not loſe it, he would ſhow that he was juſt as well acquainted with the Advantages of Blindneſs, as you are with the Effects of Pride.

The next ingenious Step that you take, is this: "*The Fable of the Bees*, ſay you, *was*

* p. 125. "*deſigned*

" *deſigned for the Entertainment of People of* " *Knowledge and Education* ;——it is a *Book* " *of ſevere and exalted Morality, that contains* " *a ſtrict Teſt of Virtue.*"

Had you ſaid that the Author was a *Seraphim*, and that he never was any nearer the Earth than the fixed Stars, I ſhould have thought you in as ſober a Way as you now appear to be in.

That you intended it for the Entertainment of *People of Knowledge and Education*, is what I cannot ſay is falſe, for if your Pride is ſuch as you aſſert, you may be capable of intending any thing; I know of nothing too monſtrous for you to go about.

But if you can believe, that you have wrote a Book of *ſevere and exalted Morality*, you muſt not laugh at thoſe who believed *Stocks* and *Stones* to be Objects of Worſhip, or took a *Leek* or an *Onion* to be a *Deity*.

You are happy in this, that you have made an Aſſertion which an Adverſary cannot further expoſe, becauſe there is no ſuperior Degree of Extravagance to which it can be compared.

For if a Perſon will write a Book to prove, that Man is a *mere Animal*, and that *moral Virtue* is the political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride, and then call it a

Book

Book of *ſevere* and *exalted Morality*, he has this Satisfaction, that no Skill can aggravate his Nonſenſe.

" *Such as it is*, you ſay, *you are ſatisfied* " *it has diverted Perſons of great Probity and* " *Virtue.*"

Pray, Sir, how does this appear? Where do you find theſe People of *great Virtue?* When you wrote your Book, you knew of no ſuch People. Virtue was then no where to be found: For you tell us, that having in vain ſought for it in the World, you at laſt went to the *Convents*, but even there it had no Exiſtence. But now, it ſeems, rather than want an Apology, you will ſuppoſe even what confutes your Book, and what you moſt hate, that there is ſuch a Being as a Man of *great Virtue.*

" *I lay it down*, you add, *as a firſt Principle*, " *that in all Societies, great or ſmall, it is the* " *Duty of every Member of it to be good; that* " *Virtue ought to be encouraged, Vice diſcoun-* " *tenanced, the Laws obeyed, and the Tranſgreſſ-* " *ors puniſhed*; and then, you ſay, there is " not *a Line in the whole Book that contradicts* " *this Doctrine.*"

This comes ſo oddly from you, that it need not be expoſed to the Reader; if you had intended it as a *public Recantation* of all that

that you had delivered before, there had been ſomething in it; but to ſay, that *there is not a Line in your Book that contradicts this*, is truſting too much to the Weakneſs of your Readers: For, can you pretend to have a *firſt Principle*, or to talk of *Duty* or *Virtue*, after you have declared, that the *moral Virtues* are all a Cheat, by making them the *political Offſpring which Flattery begot upon Pride?*

Can you recommend *Goodneſs*, who have compared the *Pulchrum* and *Honeſtum* in Actions, to the whimſical Diſtinctions of *Flowers*, and made the Difference between Good and Evil as fanciful, as the Difference between a *Tulip* and an *Auricula*.

When therefore you pretend to *lay it down as a firſt Principle, that it is the Duty of every Man to be good*, &c.

It amounts to as much, as if you had ſaid, Having ſhown, that there is nothing but Fancy in the Preference of Flowers, *I lay it down as a firſt Principle, that it is the Duty of every Man to admire the* Tulip *above all other Flowers*; *that the Love of* Tulips *ought to be encouraged*; *and that of* Auricula's *diſcountenanced*, &c.

But however, leſt any of your Readers ſhould imagine that you meant ſomething more than this, and to clear yourſelf from all

Suſpicion of Gravity or Serioufneſs in your Recommendation of *Virtue* and *Goodneſs*, you immediately add this Explication of yourſelf.

" *Would you baniſh Fraud and Luxury, pre-*
" *vent Profaneneſs and Irreligion, and make*
" *the Generality of the People charitable, good,*
" *and virtuous; break down the Printing-*
" *Preſſes, melt the Fonts, and burn all the*
" *Books in the Iſland; knock down Foreign*
" *Trade, prohibit all Commerce with Strangers,*
" *and permit no Ships to go to Sea; reſtore to*
" *the Clergy, the King, and the Barons, their*
" *antient Privileges, Prerogatives, and Poſ-*
" *ſeſſions; build new Churches, and convert all*
" *the Coin you can come at, into ſacred Utenſils;*
" *erect Monaſteries and Alms-houſes in Abun-*
" *dance, and let no Pariſh be without a Chari-*
" *ty-School; let the Clergy preach Abſtinence*
" *and Self denial to others, and take what Li-*
" *berty they pleaſe for themſelves; let no Man*
" *be made Lord-Treaſurer but a Biſhop.— By*
" *ſuch pious Endeavours, and wholeſome Regu-*
" *lations, the Scene would ſoon be altered.—Such*
" *a Change would influence the Manners of the*
" *Nation, and render them temperate, honeſt,*
" *and ſincere; and from the next Generation we*
" *might reaſonably expect an harmleſs, innocent,*
" *and well meaning People, that would never*
" *diſpute the Doctrine of Paſſive-Obedience,*

" *nor*

" *nor any other Orthodox Principles, but be ſub-*
" *miſſive to Superiors, and unanimous in Reli-*
" *gious Worſhip* *."

It muſt be owned, that you never ſo much exceeded yourſelf as in this Flight of your Oratory. And had your teeming Imagination been able to have produced one more Evil or Folly, it had been added to the lovely Idea you have formed of a People intending to live like Chriſtians.

He that can now ſuſpect you guilty of one ſober Thought in relation to Religion, or Morality, muſt be acknowledged to be very ſenſeleſs.

For, mention your Regard to Religion or Virtue as often as you pleaſe, you have here taken care to aſſure us, that you wiſh their Proſperity as *heartily*, as you wiſh to ſee the Kingdom full of *Monaſteries*, and all our Money *converted* into *ſacred Utenſils*.

But I beg pardon for ſuppoſing, that what you have ſo clearly ſaid, to ſhow your Abhorrence of Religion, and Contempt of Virtue, needs any illuſtration.

But to carry on the *Banter*, you ſtill add,
" *If I have ſhown the Way to worldly Great-*
" *neſs, I have always without Heſitation pre-*
" *ferred the Road that leads to Virtue.*"

* p. 253.

Had there been one Inſtance of this kind in your Book, I ſuppoſe you would have referred us to it. But enough has been already obſerved, to ſhow what Virtue implies in your Syſtem. I ſhall however produce one Paſſage to ſhow, how you *always and without Heſitation prefer the Road that leads to Virtue.*

Speaking of *Luſt* you ſay, " The *artful* " *Moraliſts have taught us chearfully to ſubdue* " *it.* And then you cry out, *Oh! the mighty* " *Prize we have in view for all our* Self-de- " nial! *Can any Man be ſo ſerious as to abſtain* " *from Laughter, when he conſiders that for ſo* " *much Deceit and Inſincerity practiſed upon* " *ourſelves as well as others, we have no other* " *Recompence, than the vain Satisfaction of* " *making our Species appear more exalted, and* " *remote from that of other Animals than it* " *really is, and we in our own Conſciences know* " *it to be* *."

Thus it is, that *without Heſitation* you give your Approbation of Virtue; you make the Moderation of our Paſſions to be even a Sin againſt our *own Conſciences*, as acting *deceitfully*, contrary to what we know becomes us.

You make *Self-denial*, or any Reſtraints which diſtinguiſh us from Brutes, to be ſo ridiculous a Thing, as ought to excite the Laughter and Contempt of every Creature.

* p. 153.

Thus

Thus is your proſtitute Pen wantonly employed, to put out, as far as you can, the Light of Reaſon and Religion, and deliver up mankind to Senſuality and Vileneſs.

Should I now lament the miſerable Fruits of *Free-thinking*, which thus tend not only to ſet us looſe from the Regards of Religion, but to deſtroy whatever is reaſonable, decent, or comely in human Nature, though as a Friend of Religion I might be cenſured by *ſome*, yet ſurely as an advocate for the Dignity of Man, I might be pardoned by *all*.

But it is our peculiar Unhappineſs as Clergymen, that if we ſit looſe to the Duties of Religion, we are doubly reproached, and if we firmly aſſert its Doctrines, we fall under as great Condemnation.

In all other Cauſes, a Man is better received, becauſe it is his proper Buſineſs to appear, yet that which ſhould recommend our Pleadings, happens to make them leſs regarded: We are worſe heard, becauſe God has made it our Duty to ſpeak.

But I wave this Topick; for if, when we aſſert the common Doctrines of Chriſtianity, we are thought too much intereſted, we ſhall hardly be reckoned leſs ſelfiſh, when we plead for common Equity towards ourſelves.

You have therefore picked out a right Body of Men to ridicule; and your manner

of doing it ſhows you knew, that no want of Wit would make you leſs ſucceſsful.

We often ſuffer from *Porters* and *Carmen*, who venture to be ſmart upon us, through an Aſſurance, that we muſt loſe by replying. A Security like this has encouraged you to be very liberal of your Mirth, and ſuch Mirth as might paſs for *Dulneſs* upon any other Subject.

I will not ſay how infinite your Wit has been upon our Dreſs and Habit, or what uncommon *Vivacity* you have ſhown upon the *Beaver* Hat, whether new or old.

Had you ſpared our "*Majeſtick Gate, ſlick* "*Faces kept conſtantly ſhaved, handſome Nails* "*diligently pared, and Linen tranſparently cu-* "*rious**," nothing of the *Sublime* had been found in your Book. It muſt be confeſſed, this is a heavy Charge againſt the *Prieſthood*; but we may ſee you was loath to enhance it, or you might have mentioned the *black Eyes*, the *high Foreheads*, and the *dimpled Chins*, which may be proved upon ſeveral of them, which they ſhow in the Face of the World at Noon-Day.

But ſince I have charged you with *Wit*, I do not think it fair to leave you under ſo groſs an Accuſation, without ſomething to ſupport your Spirits. Read therefore the following

* p. 137.

following Words of the moſt excellent *Bruyere*.

Have the Libertines, ſays he, *who value themſelves ſo much upon the Title of* Wits, *have they* Wit *enough to perceive, that they are only called ſo by Irony?*

You can hardly reliſh any thing of mine, after this taſte of ſo fine a Writer, I ſhall therefore trouble you but little further.

If you wonder, that I have taken no Notice of the dreadful Evils you charge upon *Charity-Schools*, and the ſad Effects which ſuch *catechizing Houſes* muſt have upon a Kingdom that is both *Chriſtian* and *Proteſtant*, I muſt tell you that I purpoſely avoided it. Some Things are ſo plain, that it is yielding too much, to offer to defend them.

Chriſtians, I hope, will have ſo much common Senſe as to know, that no Chriſtian can call ſuch Houſes an evil; and as to Complaints from other hands, Who would not wiſh that the Enemies of Chriſtianity may have every Day more reaſon to complain?

As to your Part, they will obſerve, that in theſe very Writings, where you complain of the Evil of *Charity-Schools*, you make *moral Virtue* a Cheat, the *Offspring* of *Pride*, and the Inquiry after the *beſt Religion*, but a

wild Goose Chase. A very worthy Person indeed to talk of either *Good* or *Evil!*

Whilst we can preserve but the very Name of Religion, a charitable Contribution to educate Children in it, must be reckoned amongst our best Works.

Charity Schools can never need a Defence in a Kingdom, that boasts of having the Scriptures in the *vulgar Tongue*. For if it be our Glory and Happiness to have the Bible in *English*, surely it must be in some Degree glorious, to teach our *Natives* how to read it.

You say, If any one can show the *least Tittle of Blasphemy* or *Profaneness* in your Book, or *any Thing tending to Immorality, or a Corruption of Manners, you will burn it yourself, at any Time or Place your Adversary shall appoint*. I appoint the first Time, and the most publick Place, and if you keep your Word, shall be your humble Servant.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

HAving in my Second Section mentioned Mr. *Bayle*, as the principal Author amongſt thoſe, whoſe Parts have been employed to arraign and expoſe Virtue and Religion, as being only the blind Effects of *Complexion*, natural *Temper*, and *Cuſtom*, &c. It may not be improper to recommend to his Admirers, the following Inſtances of that Gentleman's great *Penetration* and *Clearneſs* on this Subject.

Mr *Bayle* engaged in a Cauſe, where he found it neceſſary to aſſert, that a *Society of Atheiſts* might be as virtuous Men, as a Society of other People profeſſing Religion; and to maintain this Opinion, he was further obliged to declare, that religious *Opinions* and *Beliefs*, had no Influence *at all* upon Mens Actions.

This Step was very neceſſary to be taken; for if religious *Opinions* or *Beliefs* were allowed to have *any* Influence upon our Actions, then it muſt alſo have been allowed, that a *Society of Atheiſts* muſt have been leſs virtuous, than a Society of People holding religious Opinions.

Mr.

Mr. *Bayle* therefore roundly denied, that religious Opinions have any Influence upon us, and ſet himſelf to prove, that *Complexion*, natural *Temper*, *Cuſtom*, &c. are the *only* Cauſes of our Actions.

" Thus he ſays, he *is perſuaded that Man* " *is that kind of Creature, who with all his* " *boaſted Reaſon*, never *acts by the Principles* " *of his Belief* *. Again, *It cannot be denied*, " *that Man acts* continually *againſt* Princi- " ples. And again, *I pretend to have demon-* " *ſtrated that Men* never *act by Principle.*"

Mr. *Bayle* has often diverted himſelf with the Unreaſonableneſs of thoſe *Divines*, who firſt declare the Sublimity and Inconceivableneſs of the Chriſtian Myſteries, and then pretend to explain them. But they may laugh at him in their Turn, who happens to be as weak and unreaſonable even in his *Philoſophic Chair*.

For he can give it you out as an undenia- " ble Maxim, *that the Mind of Man being* " *ſubject to infinite Caprice and Variety*, no " Rule *can be laid down concerning it, not lia-* " *able to a* thouſand *Objections* **;" and then tell you *he has demonſtrated, that Man* never *acts by Principle:* As if he had ſaid, I give you here a *certain* and *infallible Rule* concerning the Mind of Man, not liable to *one* Objec-

* Miſcell. Reflect. ** Ibid. p. 279.

Objection, though I assure you, *that no Rule can be laid down, not liable to a* thousand *Objections.*

Mr. *Bayle*, to show that his *Society* of *Atheists* might be as virtuous as other Men, affirms, " that a *wicked Inclination neither a-*
" *rises from our Ignorance of God's Existence,*
" nor *is checked by the Knowledge of a supreme*
" *Judge who punishes and rewards. And that*
" *an Inclination to Evil, belongs no more to a*
" *Heart void of the Sense of God, than one*
" *possessed with it,* and *that one is under no loos-*
" *er a Rein than the other* *."

With how much *Reason* and *Freedom* of Mind Mr. *Bayle* asserts this, may be seen from what he says in other Places. Thus in his *historical Dictionary* he can tell you, " *that there is nothing so advantageous to Man,*
" *if we consider either the Mind or the Heart,*
" *as to* know *God rightly* †."

He can commend the Saying of *Silius Italicus*, as very *pertinently* spoken of the *Carthaginians*, " *Alas, miserable Mortals! your*
" *Ignorance of divine Nature, is the original*
" *Cause of your Crimes.* Again, *I will not deny*
" *there have been Pagans, who making the ut-*
" *most Use of their Notion of the divine Na-*
" *ture, have rendered it the Means of abating*
" *the Violence of their Passions* ‡."

These

* Ibid. p. 294. † vol. 4. p. 2683. ‡ Mis. Reflect. p. 294.

Theſe Contradictions need no Illuſtration; I ſhall paſs on to ſhow you a few more of the ſame Kind.

Mr. *Bayle* affirms, *that Man* never *acts by the Principles of his Belief.* Yet ſee how often he teaches the contrary. Speaking of the ſtrange Opinions and Practices of ſome *Pagans, who, though perſuaded of a Providence, denied nothing to their Luſts* and *Paſſions*; he gives this as the Reaſon of their Conduct, "*Either that they* muſt *ſuppoſe the Gods ap-* "*proved theſe Ways, or elſe that one need not* "*trouble ones ſelf whether they did or no* *."

See here this elevated Free-Thinker aſſerting, that *Man* never *acts by his Belief*, and yet making it *neceſſary*, that the *Pagans* muſt have had *ſuch* or *ſuch* a *Belief*, or elſe they could never have acted as they did.

Inſtances of this Kind are very numerous. In the Article of the *Sadducees*, he ſays, "*The good Life of the Sadducees might have* "*been an Effect* of their believing *a Provi-* "*dence.* Again, the *Orthodox will feel the* "*Activity of that Impreſſion, as well as the* "*Sadducees, and being moreover* perſuaded *of* "*a future State, Religion will have* a great- "er Influence *upon their Lives* †."

Here a *Belief* of a Providence in this World, is allowed to be the Cauſe of a *good Life*,

* Miſcell. Reflect. p. 404. † Hiſt. Dict.

Life, and a *Perſuaſion* of a future State affirmed to have a ſtill *greater Influence* upon our Lives; and yet the ſame *great Reaſoner demonſtrates*, that Men always act without any Regard to their *Beliefs* or *Perſuaſions*.

To demonſtrate that *Beliefs* and *Opinions* have no part in the forming our Lives, Mr. *Bayle* appeals to the Lives of Chriſtians; "For, *were it otherwiſe*, ſays he, *how is it* "*poſſible that Chriſtians, ſo clearly inſtructed* "*from Revelation ſupported by ſo many Mira-* "*cles, that they muſt renounce their Sins, in* "*order to be eternally happy, and to prevent* "*eternal Miſery, ſhould yet live as they do, in* "*the moſt enormous Ways of Sin and Diſobedi-* "*ence?*"

This is Mr. *Bayle*'s invincible Demonſtration, that *Beliefs* and *Perſuaſions* have no Effect upon us, and that Man *never* acts by Principle; though you ſhall ſee that he can as well demonſtrate the contrary to this.

In the Article of *Sommona-codom*, ſpeaking of this Doctrine, *viz.* "*That an old Sinner* "*who has enjoyed all the Pleaſures of Life,* "*will be eternally happy, provided he truly re-* "*pents on his Death-Bed*;" he makes this Remark, "*Doubtleſs, this may be the Reaſon* "*why the Fear of God's Judgments, or the* "*Hopes*

" *Hopes of his Rewards, make no great Im-*
" *preſſions upon worldly People* *."

Here you ſee this learned Philoſopher urges the Lives of Chriſtians, as a *Demonſtration* that Men never act by *Perſuaſion*; and yet tells you, as a Thing *paſt all doubt*, that they live as they do, through a *Perſuaſion* that a Death-Bed Repentance will ſet all right.

Take another Inſtace of the ſame kind.

Religion and Principle have no Effect upon us: " *This muſt be the Caſe*, ſays Mr. " Bayle, *or the antient Pagans, who where* " *under the Yoke of numberleſs Superſtitions,* " *continually employed in appeaſing the Anger of* " *their Idols, awed by infinite Prodigies, and* " *firmly perſuaded the Gods diſpenſed Good or* " *Evil, according to the Life they lead, had* " *been reſtrained from all the abominable Crimes* " *they committed* †."

This Paragraph is to ſhow, that religious *Perſuaſions* have no Effect upon us, becauſe if they had, the *Perſuaſions* of the Pagans muſt have made them good Men.

But Mr. *Bayle* here forgets, that he himſelf has affirmed, that the " *Pagan Religion* " *not only taught ridiculous Things, but that it* " *was beſides a Religion*, authorizing *the moſt* " abominable Crimes ‡." *That they were led to*

* Hiſt. Dict. † Miſcell. Reflect. 275. ‡ Ibid. 390.

to their Crimes by their very Religion; that it muſt have been a Point of Faith *with them, that to make themſelves Imitators of God, they ought to be Cheats, Envious, Fornicators, Adulterers.*

So that this Philoſopher ſhows, with great Conſiſtency, that the *Religion* of the *Pagans* engaged them in *abominable Crimes*; and that the *Pagans* did not act by their Religion, *becauſe* they were guilty of *abominable Crimes.*

But I proceed no further at preſent; this Specimen of Mr. *Bayle*'s Abſurdities and *Contradictions* on this very Article, where he has been moſt admired, may ſuffice to ſhow, that if he has gained upon Mens Minds, it has been by other Arts than thoſe of clear Reaſoning. I would not by this inſinuate, that he was not a Man of fine Parts; *Bellarmin*'s Abſurdities, though ever ſo many, ſtill leave room to acknowledge his great Abilities. This ſeems to have been Mr. *Bayle*'s Caſe; he was no *Jeſuit* or *Papiſt*, but he was as great a *Zealot* in his way. *Bellarmin* contradicted himſelf for the ſake of *Mother Church*; and Mr. *Bayle* contradicted himſelf as heartily, for the ſake of an *imaginary* Society, a *Society of Atheiſts.*

I have inſerted theſe few contradictory Paſſages, for the ſake of ſuch as are Proſe-

lytes

lytes to Mr. *Bayle*'s Philoſophy; let them here ſee, that in following him, they only leave Religion, to follow *Blindneſs* and *Bigotry* in Syſtems of Prophaneneſs.

When *Clergymen* contradict one another, though it be but upon a Ceremony of Religion, *Infidels* make great Advantage of it; for Irreligion having no Arguments of its own, is forced to catch at every Foreign Objection.

But Mr. *Bayle*'s *Self-contradictions* upon the chief Article of his Philoſophy, may perhaps, not leſſon his Authority with our Men of *Reaſon*.

For whether our *Free-Thinkers* are not ſuch *Bigots*, as to adore Mr. *Bayle*'s *Contradictions*, is what I will not preſume to ſay.

I will promiſe for nothing, but their little Minds, and blind Zeal, to have a Share in every Error that can give Offence to well-minded Men.

F I N I S.

THE

CASE

OF

REASON,

OR

NATURAL RELIGION,

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THE

THE

INTRODUCTION,

Shewing the

STATE of the Controverſy.

THE Infidelity, which is now openly declared for, pretends to ſupport itſelf upon the *ſufficiency*, *excellency*, and *abſolute perfection* of Reaſon, or Natural Religion.

The author, with whom I am here engaged, makes no attempt to diſprove or invalidate that *hiſtorical evidence* on which Chriſtianity is founded; but by arguments drawn from the nature of God, and natural Religion, pretends to prove that no Religion can come from God, which teaches any thing more than that which is fully manifeſt to all mankind by the *mere light* of nature.

His chief principles may be reduced to theſe following propoſitions.

1. That human reaſon, or natural light, is the *only means* of knowing all that God requires of us.

2. That

2. That reaſon, or natural light, is ſo full, ſufficient, plain, and certain a rule or guide in all religious duties, that no external divine revelation can add any thing to it, or require us to believe or practiſe any thing, that was not as fully known before. A revelation, if ever made, can only differ from natural religion in the manner of its being communicated. It can only declare thoſe very *ſame* things *externally*, which were before equally declared by the *internal* light of nature.

3. That this muſt be the caſe of natural and revealed religion, unleſs God be an arbitrary Being. For if God be not an arbitrary Being, but acts according to the reaſon and nature of things, then he can require nothing of us by revelation, but what is already required by the nature and reaſon of things. And therefore, as he expreſſes it, *reaſon and revelation muſt exactly anſwer one another like two tallies* *.

4. That whatever is at any time admitted as matter of religion, that is not manifeſt from the reaſon of the thing, and plainly required by the light of nature, is groſs ſuperſtition.

5. That

* *Page* 60.

5. That it is inconſiſtent with the divine perfections, to ſuppoſe that God can by an external revelation give any religious light or knowledge, at *any time*, to *any people*, which was not equally given at *all* times, and to *all* people.

This is the ſtate of the controverſy. As to the railing accuſations, and ſcurrilous language, which this author pours out, at all adventures upon the Chriſtian Clergy, I ſhall wholly paſs them over; my intention being only to appeal to the reaſon of the Reader, and to add nothing to it, but the ſafe unerring light of divine Revelation.

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CHAP. I.

Enquiring, whether there be any thing in the nature *and* condition *of man, to* oblige *him to think that he is not to admit of any doctrines or inſtitutions, as revealed from God, but ſuch as his own Reaſon can prove to be neceſſary from the nature of things.*

I BEGIN with enquiring what there is to *oblige* a man to hold this opinion, becauſe if there is not ſome ſtrong and plain proof ariſing from the *nature* and *condition* of man, to *oblige* him thus to abide by the ſole light of his own Reaſon; it may be ſo far from being a duty, which he owes to God, that it may be reckoned amongſt his moſt criminal preſumptions. And the pleading for this authority of his own Reaſon may have the guilt of pleading for his greateſt vanity. And if, as this Writer obſerves, *ſpiritual pride be the worſt ſort of pride**, a confident reliance upon our own Rea-

* *Page* 150.

ſon, as having a right to determine all matters between God and man, if it ſhould prove to be a *groundleſs pretenſion*, bids fair to be reckoned the higheſt inſtance of the *worſt* kind of the worſt of ſins.

Every other inſtance of vanity, every degree of perſonal pride and ſelf-eſteem may be a pardonable weakneſs in compariſon of this. For how ſmall is that pride which only makes us prefer our own perſonal beauty or merit to that of our fellow-creatures, when compared with a ſelf-confiding Reaſon, which is too haughty to adore any thing in the divine counſels which it cannot fully comprehend; or to ſubmit to any directions from God, but ſuch as its own wiſdom could preſcribe? Thus much is certain, that there can be no *medium* in this matter. The claiming this authority to our own Reaſon muſt either be a very great duty, or amongſt the greateſt of ſins.

If it be a *ſin* to admit of any *ſecrets* in divine providence, if it be a *crime* to aſcribe wiſdom and goodneſs to God in things we cannot comprehend; if it be a *baſeneſs* and *meanneſs* of ſpirit to believe that God can teach us *better*, or *more* than we can teach ourſelves; if it be a *ſhameful apoſtacy* from the dignity of our nature to be humble in the hands of God, to ſubmit to any *myſterious providence* over us, to comply with any other methods of *homage* and *adoration* of him than ſuch as we could of ourſelves contrive and juſtify; then it is certainly a great

a great duty to aſſert and maintain this authority of our own Reaſon.

On the other hand; If the profoundeſt humility towards *God*, be the higheſt inſtance of piety; if every thing within us and without us, if every thing we know of God, every thing we know of ourſelves, preaches up humility to us, as the foundation of every virtue, as the life and ſoul of all holineſs; if *ſin* had its beginning from *pride*, and *hell* be the effect of it, if *devils* are what they are through ſpiritual pride and ſelf-conceit; then we have great reaſon to believe, that the claiming this authority to our Reaſon, in oppoſition to the revealed wiſdom of God, is not a frailty of *fleſh* and *blood*, but that ſame ſpiritual pride which turned *Angels* into *apoſtate* Spirits.

Since therefore this appealing to our own Reaſon, as the abſolutely *perfect meaſure and rule* of all that ought to paſs between God and man, has an *appearance* of a pride of the *worſt* kind, and ſuch as unites us both in temper and conduct with the fallen ſpirits of the kingdom of darkneſs, it highly concerns every pleader on that ſide, to conſider what grounds he proceeds upon, and to aſk himſelf, what there is in the *ſtate* and *condition* of human nature to oblige him to think that nothing can be *divine* or *holy*, or *neceſſary* in religion, but what *human* Reaſon dictates?

I hope the reader will think this a fair ſtate of the caſe, and that all the light we can have in this Matter muſt ariſe from a thorough

conſideration of the *ſtate* and *condition* of man in this world. If without revelation he is free from myſteries as a *moral* and *religious* agent, then he has ſome plea from his *ſtate* and *condition* to reject *revealed* myſteries.

But if in a ſtate of natural religion, and mere morality, he cannot acknowledge a divine providence, or worſhip, and adore God, without *as much* implicit faith, and humble ſubmiſſion of his Reaſon, as any revealed myſteries require; then his *ſtate* or *condition* in the world condemns his refuſal of any revelation ſufficiently atteſted to come from God. This enquiry therefore into the ſtate and condition of man, being ſo plainly the true point of the controverſy, I hope to obtain the reader's impartial attention to it.

Had mankind continued in a ſtate of *perfect innocence*, without ever failing in their duty either to God or man, yet even in ſuch a ſtate, they could never have known what God would, or would not reveal to them, but by ſome expreſs revelation from him. And as God might intend to raiſe them to ſome higher, and unknown ſtate of perfection; ſo he might raiſe them to it by the revelation of ſuch things as their own Reaſon, though innocent and uncorrupt, could not have diſcovered.

But if man, in a ſtate of *innocence*, could have no pretence to ſet himſelf againſt divine revelation, and make his own Reaſon the *final judge* of what God could, or could not reveal to him; much leſs has he any pretence for

for ſo doing in his preſent ſtate of *ſin*, *ignorance*, and *miſery*. His *nature* and *condition* are ſo far from furniſhing him with reaſons againſt revelation, againſt any *ſupernatural* help from God; that they ſeem to be inconſolable without it; and every circumſtance of his life prepares him to hope for terms of *mercy* and deliverance from his preſent guilt and miſery, not according to *ſchemes* of his *own* contrivance, not from his *own Knowledge* of the *nature*, and *reaſon*, and *fitneſs* of things, but from ſome *incomprehenſible depth* of divine goodneſs.

For if ſin, and miſery, and ignorance, cannot convince us of our own weakneſs, cannot prepare us to accept of any *methods* of *atoning* for our guilt, but ſuch as our own guilty diſordered Reaſon can ſuggeſt, we are not far from the hardened ſtate of thoſe miſerable ſpirits that make war againſt God.

For to inſiſt upon the *prerogative* of our own nature, as qualifying us to make our own peace with God, and to reject the *atonement* which he has provided for us, becauſe we eſteem it more fit and reaſonable that our *own repentance* ſhould be ſufficient without it, is the ſame height of *pride* and *impiety*, as to affirm that we have no need of any repentance at all.

For as mankind, if they had continued in a ſtate of *Innocence*, could not have known how their innocence was to be rewarded, or what changes of ſtate God intended them for, but as revelation had diſcovered theſe things unto them; ſo after they were *fallen* into a ſtate of

guilt and ſin, they could never know what *effects* they were to have upon them, what *miſery* they would expoſe them to, or *when*, or *how*, or whether they were ever to be delivered from them, and made as happy as if they had *never* ſinned; theſe are things that nothing but a revelation from God could teach them.

So that for a Sinner to pretend to appoint the *atonement* for his own Sins, or to think himſelf able to tell what it *ought* to be, or what *effect* it muſt have with God, is as fooliſh and vain a preſumption, as if man in *innocence* ſhould have pretended to appoint his own method of being changed into a *Cherubim*.

The Writers againſt Revelation appeal to the *Reaſon* and *Nature* of things, as *infallibly* diſcovering every thing that a Revelation from God can teach us.

Thus our Author; *If the relations between things, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence, be not the ſole rule of God's actions, muſt not God be an arbitrary Being? But if God only commands what the nature of things ſhew to be fit, it is ſcarce poſſible that men ſhould miſtake their duty; ſince a mind that is attentive can as eaſily diſtinguiſh fit from unfit, as the Eye can beauty from deformity* *.

It is granted that there is a fitneſs and unfitneſs of actions founded in the nature of things, and reſulting from the relations that perſons and things bear to one another. It is alſo granted, that the reaſonableneſs of moſt of the duties

* *Page* 30.

duties of children to their parents, of parents to their children, and of men to men, is very apparent from the relations they bear to one another; and that ſeveral of the duties which we owe to God plainly appear to us, as ſoon as we acknowledge the relation that is between God and us.

But then, all this granted, this *whole argument* proves directly the contrary to that which this author intended to prove by it.

I here therefore join with this Author: I readily grant, that the Nature, Reaſon, and Relations of things and perſons, and the fitneſs of actions reſulting from thence, are the *ſole rule* of God's actions. And I appeal to this one common and confeſſed principle, as a ſufficient proof that a man cannot thus abide by the *ſole Light* of his own Reaſon, without contradicting the nature and reaſon of things, and denying this to be the *ſole Rule* of God's actions.

For if the *fitneſs* of actions is founded in the *nature* of things and perſons, and this fitneſs be the *ſole Rule* of God's actions, it is certain that the Rule by which he acts, muſt in many inſtances be *entirely* inconceivable by us, ſo as not to be known *at all*, and in no inſtances *fully* known, or *perfectly* comprehended.

For if God is to act according to a *fitneſs founded* in the *nature* of things, and nothing can be fit for him to do, but what has its fitneſs founded in his own *divinely perfect* and *incomprehenſible* nature, muſt he not neceſſarily act by a Rule *above* all human comprehenſion?

This argument ſuppoſes that he cannot do what is *fit* for him to do, unleſs what he does has its *fitneſs* founded in his own *Nature*; but if he muſt govern his actions by his own nature, he muſt act by a *Rule* that is juſt as *incomprehenſible* to us as his own nature.

And we can be no farther *competent judges* of the *fitneſs* of the conduct of God, than we are competent judges of the divine nature; and can no more tell what is, or is not *infinitely wiſe* in God, than we can raiſe ourſelves to a *ſtate* of infinite wiſdom.

So that if the *fitneſs* of actions is founded in the *particular nature* of things and perſons, and the fitneſs of God's actions muſt ariſe from that which is *particular* to his nature, then we have from this argument the *utmoſt certainty*, that the *Rule* or *Reaſons* of God's actions muſt in many caſes be entirely inconceivable to us, and in no caſes perfectly and fully apprehended; and for this very reaſon, becauſe he is not an *arbitrary being*, that acts by *mere will*, but is governed in every thing he does by the reaſon and nature of things. For if he is not arbitrary, but acts according to the nature of things, then he muſt act according to his *own nature*. But if his own nature muſt be the *reaſon*, *rule* and *meaſure* of his actions; if they are only fit and reaſonable becauſe they are according to this *Rule and Reaſon*, then it neceſſarily follows that the fitneſs of many of God's actions muſt be incomprehenſible to us, *merely* for this reaſon, becauſe they have

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their *proper fitneſs*; ſuch a fitneſs as is founded in the divine nature.

How miſtaken therefore is this author when he argues after this manner. *If God requires things of us, whoſe fitneſs our Reaſon cannot prove from the nature of things, muſt he not be an arbitrary Being?* For how can that prove God to be an arbitrary agent, which is the neceſſary conſequence of his not being arbitrary?

For ſuppoſing God to be an arbitrary Being, there would then then be a bare poſſibility of our comprehending the fitneſs of every thing he required of us. For as he might act by *mere will*, ſo he might chuſe to act according to our nature, and ſuitable to our comprehenſions, and not according to his own nature, and infinite perfections.

But ſuppoſing God not to be an *arbitrary Being*, but to act conſtantly as the perfections of his own nature make it *fit* and *reaſonable* for him to act, then there is an utter impoſſibility of our comprehending the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of many of his actions.

For inſtance; look at the *reaſon* of things, and the *fitneſs* of actions, and tell me how they moved God to create mankind in the ſtate and condition they are in. Nothing is more above the reaſon of men, than to explain the reaſonableneſs and infinite wiſdom of God's providence in creating man of ſuch a *form* and *condition*, to go through *ſuch* a ſtate of things as human life has ſhewn itſelf to be. No revealed myſteries can more exceed the Comprehenſion of man, than the ſtate of human life itſelf.

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Shew me according to what *fitneſs*, founded in the *nature* of things, God's infinite wiſdom was determined to form you in ſuch a manner, bring you into ſuch a world, and ſuffer and preſerve *ſuch a ſtate* of things as human life is, and then you may have ſome pretence to believe no revealed doctrines, but ſuch as your own reaſon can deduce from the nature of things and the fitneſs of actions.

But whilſt your own *form*, whilſt *Creation* and *Providence* are depths which you cannot thus look into, it is ſtrangely abſurd to pretend, that God cannot reveal any thing to you as a matter of religion, except your own reaſon can ſhew its foundation in the nature and reaſon of things.

For does not your own *make* and *conſtitution*, the reaſonableneſs of God's providence, and the *fitneſs* of the State of human life, as much concern you as any *revealed* doctrines? Is it not as *unfit* for God to create man in ſuch a *ſtate*, ſubject to ſuch a *courſe* of providence, as he cannot *prove* to be founded in the *fitneſs* and *reaſonableneſs* of things; as to reveal to him ſuch truths, or methods of ſalvation, as he cannot by any arguments of his own prove to be neceſſary?

Revelation, you ſay, is on your account, and therefore you ought to ſee the *reaſonableneſs* and *fitneſs* of it. And do not you alſo ſay that God has made you for your *own ſake*, ought you not therefore to know the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of God's forming you as you are? Do not you ſay, that providence is for the *ſake* of Man?

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is it not therefore fit and reaſonable, in the nature of things, that there ſhould be no *myſteries*, or *ſecrets* in providence, but that man ſhould ſo ſee its methods, as to be able to prove all its ſteps to be conſtantly fit and reaſonable?

Do not you ſay, that the *world* is for the *ſake* of man; is it not therefore fit and reaſonable that man ſhould ſee, that the *paſt* and *preſent* ſtate of the world has been ſuch as the reaſon and fitneſs of things required it ſhould be?

Now if the *imperfect* ſtate of human nature, the *miſeries* and *calamities* of this life, the *diſeaſes* and mortality of human bodies, the *methods* of God's continual providence in governing human affairs, are things that as much concern us, and as nearly relate to us as any methods of revealed religion; and if theſe are things that we cannot examine or explain, according to any *fitneſs* or *unfitneſs* founded in the *nature* of things, but muſt believe a great deal more of the infinite wiſdom of God, than we can ſo explain; have we any reaſon to think, that God cannot, or ought not to raiſe us out of this unhappy ſtate of things, help us to an higher order of life, and exalt us to a nearer enjoyment of himſelf, by any means but ſuch as our own poor Reaſon can grope out of the nature and fitneſs of things?

Now what is the reaſon, that all is thus myſterious and unmeaſurable by human Reaſon in theſe matters ſo nearly concerning human nature? It is becauſe God is not an *arbitrary Being*, but does that which the *incomprehenſible*

ſible perfections of his own nature make it *fit* and *reaſonable* for him to do. Do but grant that nothing can be *fit* for God to do, but what is *according* to his own *infinite perfections*; let but this be the *rule* of his actions, and then you have the *fulleſt* proof, that the fitneſs of his actions muſt be above our comprehenſion, who can only judge of a *fitneſs* according to our *own perfections*; and then we muſt be ſurrounded with myſtery for this very reaſon, becauſe God acts according to a *certain rule*, his own Nature.

Again: What is the nature of a human ſoul, upon what *terms*, and in what manner it is *united* to the body, how far it is *different* from it, how far it is *ſubject* to it, what powers and faculties it *derives* from it; are things wherein the *wiſdom* and *goodneſs* of God and the *happineſs* of man are deeply concerned. Is it not neceſſary that theſe things ſhould have their foundation in the *reaſon* and *fitneſs* of things, and yet what natural Reaſon, uninſpired from above, can ſhew that this *ſtate* of ſoul and body is founded in the reaſon and fitneſs of things?

Again: The *origin* of the ſoul, at what time it enters into the body, whether it be *immediately* created at its entrance into the body, or comes out of a *pre-exiſtent ſtate*, muſt have its fitneſs or reaſonableneſs founded in the nature of things.

For who can ſay, that it is the ſame thing, whether human ſouls are created *immediately* for

for human bodies, or whether they came into them out of ſome *pre-exiſtent ſtate?* Now one of theſe ways may be exceeding *fit* and *wiſe*, and the other as entirely *unjuſt* and *unreaſonable*, and yet when Reaſon left to its own light examines either of theſe ways, it finds itſelf *equally perplexed* with difficulties, and can affirm nothing with certainty about it.

Again: Who can ſay that it is the ſame thing to man, as a *moral agent*, or that he is to have the ſame treatment from God, or that the ſame *kinds* or *degrees* of piety muſt be exactly required, whether human ſouls be *fallen ſpirits*, that pre-exiſted before the creation of bodies, or were *immediately* created, as bodies were prepared for them?

Now here comes another act of *implicit faith* in natural religion, in a point of the *greateſt moment* to the moral world. For as to God's proceeding in this matter of the greateſt *juſtice* or *injuſtice* in his conduct over us, mere Reaſon has no ability to examine into it by any pretended fitneſs or unfitneſs founded in the nature of things; but muſt be forced to *believe* that God deals with us according to infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, or elſe be amongſt thoſe judicious believers, that believe there is no God.

Again: The origin of *ſin* and *evil*, or how it entered into the world conſiſtently with the infinite wiſdom of God, is a myſtery of *natural religion* which reaſon cannot unfold. For who can ſhew from the *reaſon* and *nature* of things, that it was *fit* and *reaſonable* for the providence of God to ſuffer ſin and evil to enter,

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and continue in the world as they have? Here therefore the man of natural religion muſt drop his method of reaſoning from the nature and fitneſs of things, and that in an article of the higheſt concern to the moral world, and be as mere a believer, as he that believes the moſt incomprehenſible myſtery of revealed religion.

Now as there have been in the ſeveral ages of the world ſome *impatient*, *reſtleſs*, and *preſuming* ſpirits, who becauſe they could not in theſe points explain the juſtice of God's providence, have taken refuge in horrid *Atheiſm*, ſo they made juſt the ſame *ſober uſe* of their reaſon as our *modern unbelievers*, who becauſe they cannot comprehend, as they would, the *fitneſs* and *neceſſity* of certain chriſtian doctrines, reſigned themſelves up to an hardened *infidelity*. For it is juſt as wiſe and reaſonable to allow of no myſteries in *Revelation*, as to allow of no myſteries or ſecrets in *Creation* and *Providence*.

And whenever this writer, or any other, ſhall think it a proper time to attack *natural* religion with as much freedom, as he has now fallen upon *revealed*, he need not enter upon any *new* hypotheſis, or *different* way of reaſoning. For the ſame turn of thought, the ſame manner of cavilling may ſoon find materials in the natural ſtate of man, for as large a bill of complaints againſt natural religion, and the myſteries of providence, as is here brought againſt revealed doctrines.

To proceed: If the *fitneſs of actions is founded in the nature and relations of beings*, then nothing

nothing can be fit for God to do, but ſo far as it is fit for the *Governor of all created beings*, whether on earth, or in any other part of the univerſe; and he cannot act fitly towards mankind, but by acting as is fit for the Governor of all beings.

Now what is fit for the *Governor* of *all created* nature to do in this or that particular part of his creation, is as much above our reaſon to *tell*, as it is above our power to *govern* all beings. And how mankind ought to be governed, with relation to the whole creation, of which they are ſo ſmall a part, is a matter equally above our knowledge, becauſe we know not how they are a part of the whole, or what relation they bear to any other part, or how their ſtate affects the whole, or any other part, than we know what beings the whole conſiſts of.

Now there is nothing that we know with more certainty, than that God is Governor of the *whole*, and that mankind are a *part* of the whole; and that the uniformity and harmony of divine providence muſt ariſe from his infinitely wiſe government of the *whole*; and therefore we have the utmoſt certainty, that we are *vaſtly incompetent* judges of the fitneſs or unfitneſs of any methods that God uſes in the government of ſo ſmall a part of the univerſe, as mankind are.

For if the actions of God cannot have their *proper fitneſs*, unleſs they are according to the *incomprehenſible greatneſs of his own nature*, and

and according to his incomprehenſible greatneſs, as *Lord* and *Governor of all created nature*; have we not the moſt undeniable certainty, that the fitneſs of the divine providence over mankind cannot poſſibly be ſeen by thoſe, who are reſolved to know nothing of God but that which their own Reaſon can teach them?

Again: If the *fitneſs of actions is founded in the relations of beings to one another*, then the fitneſs of the actions of God's providence over mankind muſt be in many inſtances altogether myſterious and incomprehenſible to us.

For the relation which God bears to mankind, as their *all-perfect Creator* and continual *Preſerver*, is a relation that our Reaſon conceives as imperfectly, and knows as little of, as it does of any of the divine attributes. When it compares it to that of a *Father* and his children, a *Prince* and his ſubjects, a *Proprietor* and his property, it has explained it in the beſt manner it can, but ſtill has left it as much a *ſecret*, as we do the divine nature, when we only ſay it is *infinitely* ſuperior to every thing that is *finite*.

By the natural Light of our Reaſon we may know with certainty ſeveral *effects* of this relation, as that it puts us under the care and protection of a wiſe, and juſt, and merciful providence, and demands from us the higheſt inſtances of humility, duty, adoration, and thankſgiving. But what it is in its own nature, what kind of ſtate, or degree of *dependency* it ſignifies, what it is to exiſt in and by God,

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what it is to ſee by a *light* that is his, to act by a power from him, to live by a *life* in him; are things as incomprehenſible to Reaſon, *left to itſelf*, as what it is to be in the *third heavens*, or to hear words that cannot be uttered.

But if this relation conſiſts in theſe *inconceivable* things, in a communication of *life*, *light*, and *power*, if theſe are enjoyed in God, and in ourſelves, our own and yet his, in a manner not to be explained by any thing that we ever heard or ſaw; then we muſt neceſſarily be poor judges of what is fit for God to require of us becauſe of this *relation*. It teaches us nothing but the ſuperficialneſs of our own knowledge, and the unfathomable depths of the divine perfections.

How little this writer has conſidered the nature and manner of this *relation* between God and Man, may be ſeen by the following paragraphs. *The Holy Ghoſt*, ſays he, *cannot deal with men as rational creatures, but by propoſing arguments to convince their underſtandings, and influence their wills, in the ſame manner as if propoſed by other agents.* As abſurd, as to ſay, God cannot *create* us as rational Beings, unleſs he creates us by ſuch means, and in the ſame *manner*, as if we were created by other agents. For to ſuppoſe that other agents can poſſibly act upon our underſtanding and will in the *ſame manner* that God does, is as groſs an abſurdity, as to ſuppoſe that other agents can create us in the ſame manner that God creates us.

And to *confine* the manner of the Holy Ghoſt's acting upon us to the manner of our acting upon one another by *arguments* and *ſyllogiſms*, is as great weakneſs, as to *confine* the manner of God's creating us to the manner of our making a *Statue* with *tools* and *inſtruments*.

But he proceeds and ſays, *For to go beyond this, would be making impreſſions on men as a ſeal does on wax, to the confounding of their reaſon, and their liberty in chuſing; and the man would then be merely paſſive, and the action would be the action of another being acting upon him, for which he could be no way accountable* *.

Here you ſee the Holy Spirit has but theſe two poſſible ways of acting upon men, it muſt either only propoſe an argument, juſt as a man may propoſe one, or it muſt act like a *ſeal upon wax*.

I only aſk this writer, Whether God communicates *life*, and *ſtrength*, and *underſtanding*, and *liberty of will* to us, only as men may communicate any thing to one another? or as a ſeal acts upon wax? If ſo, it may be granted that the Holy Ghoſt cannot act upon us any other way.

But if it muſt be affirmed, that we do, by a continual influx from God, enjoy all theſe powers, and receive the continuance of all theſe faculties from him, not as men receive things from one another, nor as *wax* receives the

* *Page* 199.

the *impreſſion* of the *ſeal*, but in a way as much above our conception, as creation is above our power; if we have all our *power* of acting by a *continual communication* from him, and yet are free-agents, have all our *light* from him, and yet are *accountable intelligent* Beings; then it muſt be great weakneſs to affirm, that the Holy Ghoſt cannot act upon us in the ſame manner: For it would be ſaying, God cannot act upon us as he does act upon us.

The ſhort of the matter is this. Either this *writer* muſt affirm, that our *rational nature*, our *underſtanding faculties*, our *power* of action, our *liberty* of will, muſt *neceſſarily* ſubſiſt without the *continual action* of God upon them, or elſe he muſt grant, that God can *act* upon our *underſtandings* and *wills* without making us as *merely paſſive* as the wax under the ſeal.

This writer ſays, *Though the relation we ſtand in to God is not artificial, as moſt are amongſt men,—yet this does not hinder, but that we may know the end he had in being related to us as Creator and Governor, and what he requires of his creatures and ſubjects.* But how are we to know this? *This*, ſays he, *the Divine Nature*, which *contains in it all perfection and happineſs, plainly points out to us* *.

If he had ſaid, ſince God muſt act over us as Creator and Governor, according to his own infinite *perfection and happineſs*, therefore his conduct over us may be *very myſterious*, he

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had drawn a *plain* concluſion. But he proves all to be plain, becauſe God is to govern us according to ſomething that is not plain, according to his own *incomprehenſible nature.*

His argument therefore proceeds thus. God muſt govern us according to his own *infinite perfection and happineſs*; but we *do not know* what his infinite perfections and happineſsare: Therefore we *plainly know* how he is to govern us.

Now if this Writer is capable of taking ſuch an argument as this to be demonſtrative, it is no wonder that all his principles of Religion are founded upon demonſtration.

But if he knows no more of what ariſes from the *Relation* between God and his creatures, than he has here demonſtrated, he might be very well content with ſome farther knowledge from Divine Revelation.

It is becauſe of this incomprehenſible Relation between God and his creatures, that we are unavoidably ignorant of what God may juſtly require of us, either in a ſtate of *innocence*, or *ſin*. For as the fitneſs of actions between Beings *related* muſt reſult from their reſpective Natures, ſo the incomprehenſibility of the Divine Nature, on which the Relation between God and man is founded, makes it utterly impoſſible for mere natural reaſon to ſay what *kind* of *homage*, or *worſhip*, he may *fitly* require of man in a ſtate of *innocence*; or what *different* worſhip and homage he may, or muſt require ofm en as *ſinners*.

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And to appeal to the infinite Perfections of God, as *plainly pointing this out*, is the ſame extravagance, as to appeal to the *incomprehenſibility* of God as a plain proof of our comprehending what God is.

As to the obligations of moral or ſocial duties, which have their foundation in the conveniencies of this life, and the ſeveral relations we bear to one another, theſe are the ſame in the ſtate of *Innocence* or *Sin*; and we know that we truly act according to the Divine Will, when we act according to what theſe relations require of us.

But the queſtion is, What diſtinct kind of *Homage*, or *Service*, or *Worſhip* God may require us to render to him, either in a ſtate of *Innocence*, or *Sin*, on account of that Relation he bears to us as an all-perfect Creator and Governor?

But this is a queſtion that God alone can reſolve.

Human Reaſon cannot enter into it, it has no principle to proceed upon in it. For as the *neceſſity* of Divine Worſhip and Homage, ſo the *particular matter* and *manner* of it muſt have their reaſon in the Divine Nature.

Sacrifice, if conſidered only as an *human Invention*, could not be proved to be a reaſonable ſervice. Yet conſidered as a *Divine Inſtitution*, it would be the greateſt folly not to receive it as a reaſonable ſervice. For as we could ſee no reaſon for it if it was of human

invention, ſo we ſhould have the greateſt reaſon to comply with it, becauſe it was of Divine Appointment. Not as if the Divine Appointment altered the *nature* and *fitneſs* of things; but becauſe nothing has the *nature* and *fitneſs* of Divine Worſhip, but becauſe it is of Divine Appointment.

Man therefore, had he continued in a ſtate of Innocence, and without Revelation, might have lived in an awful fear, and pious regard of God, and obſerved every duty both of moral and civil life, as an act of obedience to him. But he could have no foundation either to invent any particular *matter* or *manner* of Divine Worſhip himſelf, or to reject any that was appointed by God as *unneceſſary*. It would have been ridiculous to have pleaded his innocence, as having no need of a Divine Worſhip? For who can have greater reaſon, or be fitter to worſhip God, than innocent Beings? It would have been more abſurd, to have objected the ſufficiency and perfection of their reaſon; for why ſhould men reject a *revealed method and manner* of Divine Worſhip and Service, becauſe God had given them ſenſe and reaſon of their own, ſufficient for the duties of ſocial and civil life?

And as reaſon in a ſtate of ſuch innocence and perfection could not have any pretence to ſtate, or appoint the matter or manner of Divine Worſhip, ſo when the ſtate of innocence was changed for that of ſin, it then became more difficult for bare reaſon to know what kind

kind of homage, or Worſhip could be acceptable to God from ſinners.

For what the *Relation* betwixt God and ſinners makes it fit and reaſonable for God to require or accept of them, cannot be determined by human reaſon.

This is a *new State*, and the foundation of a *new Relation*, and nothing can be fit for God to do in it, but what has its *fitneſs reſulting* from it. We have nothing to help our conceptions of the forementioned *relative Characters* of God, as our *Governor* and *Preſerver*, but what we derive from our idea of human *Fathers* and *Governors*. Which idea only helps us to comprehend theſe *relations*, juſt as our idea of human power helps us to comprehend the *Omnipotence* of God. For a father or governor, no more repreſents the *true ſtate* of God as our *Governor* and *Preſerver*, than our living in our father's *family*, repreſents the *true manner* of our living in God.

Theſe relations are both very plain, and very myſterious; they are very plain and certain, as to the *reality* of their exiſtence, and highly myſterious and inconceivable, as to the *manner* of their exiſtence.

That which is *plain* and *certain*, in theſe relative characters of God, plainly ſhews our obligations to every inſtance of *duty*, *homage*, *adoration*, *love*, and *gratitude*.

And that which is *myſterious* and *inconceivable* in them is a juſt and ſolid foundation of

that *profound humility, awful reverence, internal piety,* and *tremendous ſenſe* of the divine Majeſty, with which devout and pious perſons think of God, and aſſiſt at the *offices* and *inſtitution* of religion. Which excites in them a higher zeal for doctrines and inſtitutions of divine revelation, than for all things human; that fills them with regard and reverence for all *things,* places, and offices, that are either by divine or human authority appointed to aſſiſt, and help their deſired intercourſe with God.

And if ſome people, by a *long* and *ſtrict* attention to *Reaſon, clear ideas,* the *fitneſs* and *unfitneſs* of things, have at laſt arrived at a demonſtrative certainty, that all theſe ſentiments of piety and devotion are mere *bigotry, ſuperſtition,* and *enthuſiaſm*; I ſhall only now obſerve, that *youthful extravagance, paſſion,* and *debauchery,* by their own *natural tendency,* without the aſſiſtance of any other guide, ſeldom fail of making the ſame diſcovery. And though it is not reckoned any reflection upon *great wits,* when they hit upon the ſame thought, yet it may ſeem ſome diſparagement of that *reaſon* and *philoſophy,* which teach *old men* to think and judge the ſame of religion, that *paſſion* and *extravagance* teach the young.

To return: As there is no ſtate in human life, that can give us a true idea of any of the forementioned relative characters of God, ſo this relative ſtate of God towards ſinners is ſtill more remote, and leſs capable of being truly com-

comprehended by any thing obſervable in the relations betwixt a *judge* and criminals, a *creditor* and his debtors, a *phyſician* and his patients, a father or prince, and their diſobedient children and ſubjects.

For none of theſe ſtates ſeparately, nor all of them jointly conſidered, give us any juſt idea, either of the *nature* and *guilt* of ſin, or how God is to deal with ſinners, on the account of the relation he bears to them.

And to aſk, whether God in puniſhing ſinners, acts as a *phyſician* towards patients, or as a *creditor* towards debtors, or as a *prince* towards rebels, or a *judge* over criminals; is the ſame weakneſs as to aſk, whether God, as our *continual preſerver*, acts as our parents, from whom we have our *maintenance*, or as a prince, that only *protects* us? For as the *maintenance* and *protection* that we receive from our parents and prince, are not proper and true repreſentations of the *nature* and *manner* of our *preſervation* in God, but only the propereſt words that human language affords us, to ſpeak of things not human, but divine and inconceivable in their own proper natures: ſo a *phyſician* and his patients, a *creditor* and his debtors, a *prince* and his rebels, or a *judge* over criminals, neither ſeparately nor jointly conſidered, are proper and ſtrict repreſentations of the *reaſons* and *manner* of God's proceedings with ſinners, but only help us to a more proper language to ſpeak about them, than any other ſtates of human life.

To

To aſk, whether *ſin* hath ſolely the *nature* of an offence, againſt a prince or a father, and ſo is pardonable by mere goodneſs; whether it is like an *error* in a *road* or *path*, and ſo is entirely at an end when the right path is taken; whether its guilt hath the nature of a debt, and ſo is capable of being diſcharged juſt as a debt is; whether it affects the ſoul as a *wound* or *diſeaſe* affects the body, and ſo ought only to move God to act as a good phyſician? all theſe queſtions are as vain as to aſk whether knowledge in God is really *thinking*, or his nature a real *ſubſtance*. For as his knowledge and nature cannot be ſtrictly defined, but are capable of being ſignified by the terms *thinking* and *ſubſtance*, ſo the nature of ſin is not *ſtrictly repreſented* under any of theſe characters, but is capable of receiving *ſome repreſentation* from every one of them.

When ſin is ſaid to be an offence againſt God, it is to teach us that we have infinitely more reaſon to dread it on *God's account*, than to dread any offence againſt our parents or governors.

When it is compared to a *debt*, it is to ſignify, that our ſins make us accountable to God not in the *ſame manner*, but with the ſame certainty, as a debtor is anſwerable to his creditor; and becauſe it has ſome likeneſs to a debt, that of ourſelves we are not able to pay.

When it is compared to a *wound*, or diſeaſe in the body, it is not to teach us that it may

may as juſtly and eaſily be healed as bodily wounds, but to help us to conceive the greatneſs of its evil; that, as diſeaſes bring death to the body, ſo ſin brings a worſe kind of death upon the ſoul.

Since therefore the *nature* and *guilt* of ſin can only ſo far be known, as to make it highly to be *dreaded*, but not ſo known as to be *fully* underſtood by any thing we can compare it to: ſince the *relation* which God bears to *ſinners* can only be ſo known as to make it highly reaſonable to proſtrate ourſelves before him in every inſtance of humility and penitence, but not ſo fully known as to teach us how, or in what manner God muſt deal with us; it plainly follows, that if God is not an *arbitrary* Being, but acts according to a *fitneſs reſulting* from this relation, he muſt, in this reſpect, act by a *rule* or *reaſon* known only to himſelf, and ſuch as we cannot *poſſibly* ſtate from the *reaſon* and nature of things.

For if the nature of things, and the fitneſs of actions reſulting from their relations, is to be the rule of our Reaſon, then *Reaſon* muſt be here at a full ſtop, and can have no more light or knowledge to proceed upon, in ſtating the *nature*, the *guilt*, or proper *atonement* of ſin in men, than of ſin in *Angels*.

For *Reaſon*, by conſulting the *nature* and *fitneſs* of things, can no more tell us what the guilt of ſin is, what *hurt* it does us, how far

far it *enters* into, and *alters* our very nature, what *contrariety to* and *ſeparation* from God it neceſſarily brings upon us, or what *ſupernatural* means are, or are not neceſſary to aboliſh it; our *Reaſon* can no more tell this, than our *ſenſes* can tell us what is the *inward*, and what is the *outward* light of Angels.

Aſk Reaſon what *effect* ſin has upon the ſoul, and it can tell you no more, than if you had aſked what effect the *omnipreſence* of God has upon the ſoul.

Aſk Reaſon, and the nature of things, What is or ought to be the *true nature* of an atonement for ſin, how far it is like *paying* a *debt*, *reconciling* a *difference*, or *healing* a *wound*, or how far it is different from them? and it can tell you no more, than if you had aſked, What is the *true degree* of power that *preſerves* us in exiſtence, how far it is *like* that which at firſt created us, and how far it is *different* from it.

All theſe enquiries are, by the nature of things, made impoſſible to us, ſo long as we have no light but from our own natural capacities, and we cannot take upon us to be *knowing* and *philoſophers* in theſe matters, but by deſerting our Reaſon, and giving ourſelves up to *viſion* and *imagination*.

And we have as much authority from the reaſon and nature of things to appeal to *hunger* and *thirſt*, and *ſenſual pleaſure*, to tell us *how* our ſouls ſhall live in the beatifick preſence of God, as to appeal to our *reaſon* and

logic

logic to demonſtrate how ſin is to be *atoned*, or the ſoul *altered*, *prepared*, and *purified* for future happineſs.

For God has no more given us our Reaſon to *ſettle* the nature of an atonement for ſin, or to find out what can, or cannot take away its guilt, than he has given us *ſenſes* and *appetites* to ſtate the nature, or diſcover the ingredients or future happineſs.

And he who rejects the *atonement* for ſins made by the ſon of God as *needleſs*, becauſe he cannot prove it to be *neceſſary*, is as extravagant, as he that ſhould deny that God created him by his *only Son*, becauſe he did not *remember* it. For our memory is as proper a faculty to tell us, whether God at firſt created us, and all things by his only Son, as our *Reaſon* is to tell us, whether we ought to be reſtored to God, with or without the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt.

When therefore this writer ſays, *Can any thing be more evident, than that if doing evil be the only cauſe of God's diſpleaſure, that the ceaſing to do evil muſt take away that diſpleaſure* * *?*

Juſt as if he had ſaid, if converſing with a *leper* has been the only cauſe of a man's getting a *leproſy*, muſt not departing from him be the removal of the *leproſy?* For if any one gueſſing at the guilt of ſin, and its *effects* on the ſoul, ſhould compare it to a *leproſy* in the body, he can no more ſay, that he has reached its

* *Page* 4.

its *real internal* evil, than he, that comparing the happineſs of heaven to a crown of glory, can be ſaid to have deſcribed its real happineſs.

This *writer* has no occaſion to appeal to reaſon, and the nature of things, if he can be thus certain about things, whoſe nature is not only obſcure, but *impoſſible* to be known. For it is as impoſſible for him to know the *guilt* and *effects* of ſin, as to know the ſhape of an Angel. It is as impoſſible to know by the mere light of reaſon what God's *diſpleaſure* at ſin is, what *contrariety* to, or *ſeparation* from ſinners it implies, or how it *obliges* God to deal with them as to know what the internal eſſence of God is. Our author therefore has here found the utmoſt degree of evidence, where it was *impoſſible* for him to have the *ſmalleſt degree* of knowledge.

For though it is very evident, that in the caſe of ſin Reaſon can preſcribe nothing but repentance; yet it is equally evident, that Reaſon cannot ſay, nothing more is required to deſtroy the effects of ſin, and to put the ſinner in the *ſame ſtate* as if it had never been committed.

If a man, having *murdered* twenty of his fellow-creatures, ſhould afterward be ſorry for it, and wiſh that he had a power to bring them to life again, or to create others in their ſtead, would this be an *evident* proof that he was no *murderer*, and that he had never killed one man in his life? Will his ceaſing to kill, and wiſhing

wiſhing he had a power to create others in their ſtead, be a *proof* that he is juſt in the *ſame ſtate* with God, as if he had never murdered a man in his life? But unleſs this can be ſaid, unleſs a man's repentance ſufficiently proves that he *never* was a ſinner, it cannot be evident, that repentance is ſufficient to put a man in the *ſame ſtate* as if he never had ſinned.

He therefore that ſays, *If ſin be the only cauſe of God's diſpleaſure, muſt not ceaſing from ſin take away his diſpleaſure?* has juſt as much ſenſe and reaſon on his ſide, as if he had ſaid, If a man's *murdering* of himſelf is the cauſe of God's diſpleaſure, muſt not his reſtoring himſelf to life again take away God's diſpleaſure?

For there is as much foundation in reaſon, and the nature of things, to affirm that the ſoul of a *ſelf-murderer* muſt have a ſufficient power to undo the effects of murder, and put him in his former ſtate; as to affirm, that *every ſinner* muſt have a ſufficient natural power of undoing all the effects of ſin, and putting himſelf in the ſame ſtate as if he had never ſinned.

This objection therefore againſt any *ſupernatural* means of atoning for ſin, taken from the *ſufficiency* of our own repentance, is as *clear* and *philoſophical*, as that *knowledge* that is without *any ideas*, and as juſtly to be relied upon, as that *concluſion* which has no *premiſes*.

This

This writer has two more objections againſt the atonement for ſin made by Jeſus Chriſt. *Firſt*, as it is an *human ſacrifice, which nature itſelf abhors*; and which was looked upon as the great abomination of idolatrous *pagan* worſhip.

The *cruelty*, *injuſtice*, and *impiety* of ſhedding *human* blood in the ſacrifices of the *pagan* religion is fully granted; but *Reaſon* cannot thence bring the ſmalleſt objection againſt the ſacrifice of Chriſt, as it was *human*.

For how can Reaſon be more diſregarded than in ſuch an argument as this? The *pagans* were unjuſt, cruel, and impious in offering human blood to their falſe gods, therefore the true God cannot receive any *human* ſacrifice for ſin, or allow any perſons to die as a puniſhment for ſin.

For if no human ſacrifice can be fit for God to receive, becauſe human Sacrifices, as parts of *pagan* worſhip, were unjuſt and impious; then it would follow, that the *mortality*, to which all mankind are appointed by God, muſt have the *ſame cruelty* and *injuſtice* in it. Now that *death* is a puniſhment for ſin, and that all mankind are by death offered as a *ſacrifice* for ſin, is not only a doctrine of revealed Religion, but the plain dictate of Reaſon. For though it is Revelation alone that can teach us, how God threatened death, as the puniſhment of a particular ſin, yet reaſon muſt be obliged to acknowledge, that men die becauſe they are ſinners. But, if men die be-

cauſe they are ſinners, and reaſon itſelf muſt receive this as the moſt juſtifiable cauſe of death; then reaſon muſt allow, that the death of all mankind is received by the true God as a *ſacrifice* for ſin. But if reaſon muſt acknowledge the death of all mankind as a ſacrifice for ſin, then it can have no juſt objection againſt the ſacrifice of Chriſt, *becauſe* it was *human*.

Revelation therefore teaches nothing more hard to be believed on this point, than reaſon teaches. For if it be juſt and fit in God to *appoint* and *devote* all men to death, as the proper *puniſhment* and *means* of their deliverance from their ſins; how can it be proved to be unjuſt and unfit in God to receive the death of Jeſus Chriſt for the ſame ends, and to render thereby the common death and ſacrifice of mankind truly effectual?

I need not take upon me to prove the *fitneſs* and *reaſonableneſs* of God's procedure in the *mortality* of mankind; Revelation is not under any neceſſity of proving this; becauſe it is no difficulty that ariſes from Revelation, but equally belongs to natural religion; and both of them muſt acknowledge it to be fit and reaſonable, not becauſe it can be proved to be ſo from the nature of things, but is to be believed to be ſo by faith and piety.

But if the neceſſary faith and piety of natural religion, will not ſuffer us to think it *inconſiſtent* with the juſtice and goodneſs of God, to appoint all mankind victims to death

on the account of ſin, then *reaſon*, or *natural* religion, can have no objection againſt the ſacrifice of Chriſt, as it is an *human ſacrifice*.

And all that *revelation* adds to *natural* religion, on the point of *human* ſacrifice, is only this; the knowledge of *one*, that gives *merit*, *effect*, and *ſanctification* to all the reſt.

Secondly, It is objected that the atonement made by Jeſus Chriſt repreſents God as puniſhing the *innocent* and acquitting the *guilty*; or, as puniſhing the innocent *inſtead* of the guilty.

But this proceeds all upon miſtake; for the atonement made by Jeſus Chriſt, though it procures pardon for the guilty, yet it does not acquit them, or excuſe them from any puniſhment or ſuffering for ſin, which *reaſon could impoſe upon them*. Natural religion calls men to repentance for their ſins: the atonement made by Jeſus Chriſt does not acquit them from it, or pardon them without it, but calls them to a *ſeverer* repentance, a *higher* ſelf-puniſhment and penance, than natural religion alone preſcribes. So that *reaſon* cannot accuſe this atonement of *acquitting* the guilty; ſince it brings them under a neceſſity of doing *more*, and performing a *ſeverer* repentance, than reaſon alone can impoſe upon them.

God therefore does not by this proceeding (as is unreaſonably ſaid) ſhew his *diſ-*

like

like of the *innocent*, and his *approbation* of the *wicked*.

For how can God be thought to puniſh our bleſſed Saviour out of *diſlike*, if his ſufferings are repreſented of ſuch infinite merit with him? Or how can he ſhew thereby his *approbation* of the guilty, whoſe repentance is not *acceptable* to him, till recommended by the infinite merits of Jeſus Chriſt?

Reaſon therefore has nothing that it can juſtly object againſt the atonement made by our bleſſed Lord, either as it was an *human ſacrifice*, or as *freeing* the *guilty*, and puniſhing the innocent in their ſtead; becauſe this very ſacrifice calls people to a *higher ſtate* of ſuffering and puniſhment for ſin, than reaſon alone could oblige them to undergo.

As to the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs of our bleſſed Lord's ſufferings, as he was God and man; and the *nature* and *degree* of their worth; reaſon can no more enter into this matter, or *prove* or *diſprove* any thing about it, than it can enter into the ſtate of the whole creation, and ſhew how it could, or could not, be in the whole better than it is.

For you may as well aſk any of your *ſenſes*, as aſk your *reaſon* this principal queſtion, *Whether any ſupernatural means be neceſſary for the atonement of the ſins of mankind?* Or, ſuppoſing it neceſſary, whether the *mediation*, *death*, and *interceſſion* of Jeſus Chriſt, as God and man, be that true ſupernatural means?

For as the fitneſs or unfitneſs of any *ſupernatural* means, for the atonement of ſin, muſt reſult from the *incomprehenſible relation* God bears to ſinners; as it muſt have ſuch *neceſſity*, *worth*, and *dignity*, as this relation *requires*, and becauſe it requires it; it neceſſarily follows, that if God acts according to *this relation*, the *fitneſs* of his actions cannot be according to our comprehenſion.

Again: Suppoſing ſome *ſupernatural means* to be neceſſary, for deſtroying the guilt and power of ſin; or that the *mediation*, *ſufferings*, and *interceſſion* of the Son of God incarnate is that true ſupernatural means, it neceſſarily follows, that a revelation of ſuch, or any other *ſupernatural* means, cannot poſſibly be made obvious to our reaſon and ſenſes, as the things of human life, or the tranſactions amongſt men are; but can only be ſo revealed, as to become juſt occaſions of our *faith*, *humility*, *adoration*, and *pious reſignation* to the divine wiſdom and goodneſs.

For to ſay that ſuch a thing is *ſupernatural*, is only ſaying that it is ſomething, which, by the *neceſſary ſtate* of our own nature, we are as incapable of knowing, as we are incapable of ſeeing *ſpirits*.

If therefore ſupernatural and divine things are by the letter of Scripture ever revealed to us, they cannot be revealed to us as they are in their *own nature*; for if they could, ſuch things would not be *ſupernatural*, but ſuch as were ſuited to our capacities.

If

If an *angel* could appear to us, as it is in its own nature, then we ſhould be *naturally* capable of ſeeing angels; but becauſe our nature is not *capable* of ſuch a ſight, and angels are as to us *ſupernatural* objects; therefore, when *angels* appear to men, they muſt appear, not as they are in themſelves, but in ſome *human*, or *corporeal* form, that their appearance may be ſuited to our capacities.

It is juſt thus when any *ſupernatural* or *divine* matter is revealed by God, it can no more poſſibly be revealed to us, as it is in its *own nature*, than an *Angel* can appear to us, or make itſelf viſible by us, as it is in its own nature; but ſuch ſupernatural matter can only be revealed to us, by being repreſented to us by its likeneſs to ſomething that we already *naturally* know.

Thus revelation teaches us this *ſupernatural* matter; that Jeſus Chriſt is making *perpetual interceſſion for us in heaven:* For Chriſt's *real ſtate*, or *manner* of exiſtence with God in heaven, in regard to his Church, cannot as it is in its *own nature* be deſcribed to us; it is in this reſpect ineffable, and incomprehenſible. And therefore, this high and inconceivable manner of Chriſt's exiſtence with God in heaven, in regard to his church, is revealed to us under an idea, that gives us the trueſt repreſentation of it that we are capable of; *viz.* the idea of a *perpetual interceſſion* for his church.

But if any one ſhould thence infer, that the Son of God muſt therefore either be always upon his knees in acts of *mental* or *vocal* prayer, or *proſtrate* in ſome humble form of a ſupplicant, he would make a very weak inference.

Becauſe this revealed idea of Chriſt, as a perpetual Interceſſor in heaven, is only a comparative repreſentation of ſomething, that cannot be *directly* and *plainly* known as it is in its own nature; and only teaches us, how to believe ſomething, though imperfectly, yet *truly* and *uſefully*, of an incomprehenſible matter.

Juſt as our own ideas of *wiſdom* and *goodneſs* do not teach us what the divine wiſdom and goodneſs are in their *own natures*, but only help us to believe ſomething *truly* and *uſefully* of thoſe perfections of God, which are in themſelves inconceivable by us.

But then there is no inferring any thing from theſe ideas, by which divine and ſupernatural things are repreſented to us, but only the *truth* and *certainty* of that *likeneſs* under which they are repreſented.

Thus from our own idea of goodneſs in ourſelves, we can infer nothing concerning goodneſs as it is a perfection inherent in God, but only this, that there certainly is in God ſome *inconceivable*, *infinite* perfection, *truly anſwerable* to that which we call goodneſs in ourſelves, though as *infinitely* different from it, as *Omni-*

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potence is infinitely different from all that we *naturally* know of *power*.

But then we can proceed no farther than to the *truth* and *certainty* of this *likeneſs*; we cannot by any farther conſiderations of the *nature* and *manner* of goodneſs, as it is in ourſelves, infer any thing farther as to the *nature* and *manner* of the *divine goodneſs*. This is as impoſſible, as to ſtate the real nature and manner of *Omnipotence*, by conſidering the *particulars* of *human power*.

In like manner, our revealed idea of Jeſus Chriſt as an *Interceſſor* for us in heaven, gives us the utmoſt certainty that he is in heaven for our benefit, in a manner *truly* and *fully* anſwerable to that of a *powerful Interceſſor*. But if from conſidering our own ideas of *human Interceſſors*, we ſhould thence pretend to infer the *real ſupernatural* manner of Chriſt's exiſtence in heaven, we ſhould fall into the ſame abſurdity, as if we undertook to repreſent the *true* nature of *Omnipotence*, by conſidering what we knew of the *nature* and *manner* of human power.

Again: When it is by the letter of Scripture revealed to us, that the bleſſed Jeſus is the one *Mediator* between God and man; that he is the *Atonement*, the *Propitiation*, and *Satisfaction* for our ſins; theſe expreſſions only teach us *as much* outward knowledge of ſo great a myſtery, as *human* language can repreſent. But they do not teach us the *real* or *perfect* nature of Chriſt's *ſtate* between God and ſinners. For

that being a *divine* and *ſupernatural* matter, cannot by any outward words be revealed to us as it is in its *own Nature*, any more than the *eſſence* of God can be made *viſible* to our eyes of Fleſh.

But theſe expreſſions teach us thus much with certainty, that there is in the *ſtate* of Chriſt between God and ſinners, ſomething infinitely and inconceivably beneficial to us, and *truly anſwerable* to all that we mean by *mediation*, *atonement*, *propitiation*, and *ſatisfaction*.

And though the *real, internal manner* of this mediation and atonement, as it is in its *own nature*, is *incomprehenſible* to the natural man, yet this does not leſſen our knowledge of the *truth* and *certainty* of it, any more than the *incomprehenſibility* of the divine nature leſſens our *certainty* of its real exiſtence.

And as our idea of God, though conſiſting of incomprehenſible perfections, helps us to a real and certain knowledge of the divine nature, and though all myſterious, is yet the ſolid foundation of all piety, ſo our idea of Jeſus Chriſt, as our *mediator* and *atonement*, though it be mighty incomprehenſible in itſelf, as to its real nature, yet helps us to a *certain* and *real* knowledge of Chriſt as our *mediator* and *atonement*; and, though full of myſtery, it is yet full of motives to the higheſt degrees of piety, devotion, love, and gratitude to God.

All

All objections therefore, raiſed from any difficulties about the nature of *atonements*, *propitiations*, and *ſatisfactions*, as theſe words are uſed to ſignify in human life, and common language, are vain and entirely groundleſs.

For all theſe objections proceed upon this ſuppoſition, that *atonement* and *ſatisfaction*, when attributed to Jeſus Chriſt, ſignify neither *more* nor *leſs*, nor operate in any other manner, than when they are uſed as terms in *human laws*, or in *civil* life: Take away this ſuppoſition, and all objections are entirely removed with it.

Thus our author thinks this an unanſwerable difficulty in the preſent caſe, when he aſks, How *Sins freely pardoned could want any expiation?* Or how, after a full *equivalent paid, and adequate ſatisfaction given, all could be mercy, and pure forgiveneſs* *?

And yet all this difficulty is founded upon this abſurd ſuppoſition, that atonement and ſatisfaction, when attributed to Jeſus Chriſt, ſignify neither more nor leſs, than atonements and ſatisfactions, when ſpoken of in human laws, and human life.

Which is full as abſurd, as to ſuppoſe that *power* and *life*, when attributed to God, ſignify neither more nor leſs, than when they are ſpoken of men: For there is no reaſon why we ſhould think there is any thing myſterious and incomprehenſible in *power* and *life*, when attributed to God, but what is the ſame reaſon

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ſon for our thinking, that *atonement* and *ſatisfaction*, when aſcribed to the Son of God, muſt be myſterious and incomprehenſible.

To return: I have granted this writer his great principle, *that the relations of things and perſons, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence is the ſole rule of God's actions:* and I have granted it upon this ſuppoſition, that it muſt thence follow, that God muſt act according to his *own nature*; and therefore nothing could be fit for God to do, or worthy of him, but what had the reaſon of its fitneſs in his own nature: and if ſo, then the *rule* of his actions could not fall within our comprehenſion. And conſequently, *reaſon alone* could not be a *competent judge* of God's proceedings; or ſay, what God might, or might not require of us: and therefore I have, by this means, plainly turned this main argument againſt himſelf, and made it fully confute that doctrine which he intended to found upon it.

But though I have thus far, and for this reaſon, granted the *nature* and *relations* of things and beings, to be the rule of God's actions, becauſe that plainly ſuppoſes, that therefore his *own nature* muſt be the rule of his actions; yet ſince our *author* and other modern oppoſers of revealed doctrines of religion, hold it in another ſenſe, and mean by it I know not what *eternal, immutable* reaſons and relations of things, *independent* of any being, and which are a *common rule and law of God and man*, I entirely declare

declare againſt it, as an erroneous and groundleſs opinion.

Thus, when this writer ſays, *If the relations between things, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence, be not the ſole rule of God's actions, muſt he not be an arbitrary being?* As he here means ſome *eternal, immutable relations, independent* of God, ſo to ſuppoſe that God cannot be a *wiſe* and *good* being, unleſs ſuch eternal independent relations be the *ſole rule* of his actions, is as erroneous, as to affirm that God cannot be *omniſcient*, unleſs *mathematical demonſtrations* be his *ſole manner* of knowing all things. And it is juſt as reaſonable to fix God's knowledge *ſolely* in mathematical demonſtrations, that we may thence be aſſured of his *infallible knowledge*, as to make I know not what independent relations of things the *ſole rule* of his actions, that we may thence be aſſured he is not *arbitrary*, but a wiſe and good Being.

And we have as ſtrong reaſons to believe God to be, in the higheſt degree, *wiſe* and *good*, without knowing on *what* his wiſdom and goodneſs are *founded*, as we have to believe him to be *omniſcient* and *eternal*, without knowing on *what* his *omniſcience* is founded, or to *what* his *eternity* is owing. And we have the ſame reaſon to hold it a vain and fruitleſs enquiry, to aſk what *obliges* God to be *Wiſe* and *Good*, as to aſk what obliges him to be *Omniſcient* or *Eternal*.

And

And as it would be abſurd to aſcribe the *Exiſtence* of God to *any cauſe*, or found it upon any *independent relations* of things, ſo it is the ſame abſurdity, to aſcribe the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of God to *any cauſe*, or found them upon any independent relations of things.

Nor do we any more *loſe* the notion, or *leſſen* the certainty of the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, becauſe we cannot ſay on *what* they are founded, or to *what* they are to be aſcribed, than we *loſe* the notion of God, or render his exiſtence *uncertain*, becauſe it cannot be founded on any thing, or aſcribed to any cauſe.

And as in our account of the exiſtence of things, we are obliged to have recourſe to a Being whoſe exiſtence muſt not be aſcribed to *any cauſe*, becauſe every thing cannot have a cauſe, no more than every thing can be created, ſo in our account of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, there is the ſame neceſſity of having recourſe to an infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, that never *began* to be, and that is as different as to its *reaſon* and *manner* of exiſtence, from all other wiſdom and goodneſs that have a beginning, as the *exiſtence* of God is *different* from the exiſtence of the creatures.

But if it be neceſſary to hold, that there is an infinite wiſdom and goodneſs that *never began* to be, then it is as neceſſary to affirm, that ſuch wiſdom and goodneſs can no more be *founded* upon the *relations* of things, than the *unbeginning exiſtence* of God can be *founded* upon the

the exiſtence of things. And to ſeek for any *reaſons* of a wiſdom and goodneſs that could not begin to be, but was always in the *ſame infinite* ſtate, is like ſeeing the cauſe of that which can have no cauſe, or aſking *what* it is that *contains* infinity.

But to derive the wiſdom and goodneſs of God from the directions he receives from the *Relations* of things, becauſe our wiſdom and goodneſs is directed by them, is as weak and vain, as to found his *knowledge* upon ſenſation and reflection, becauſe our rational knowledge is *neceſſarily* founded upon them.

When therefore this writer ſaith, *Infinite wiſdom can have no commands, but what are founded on the unalterable reaſon of things* *; he might as juſtly have ſaid, an *infinite Creator* can have no *power* of creating, but what is founded on the *unalterable nature* of creatures.

For the *reaſon* of things is juſt as unalterable, as the *nature* of creatures. And if the reaſons and relations of things are nothing elſe but their *manner* of exiſtence, or the *ſtate* of their nature, certainly the relations of things muſt have the ſame *beginning*, and the ſame *alterable* or unalterable nature, as the things from whence they flow. Unleſs it can be ſaid, that a thing may exiſt in *ſuch a manner*, tho' it does not exiſt at all.

Nothing is more certain, than that the relations of things are only the *particular ſtate* of

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of their nature, or *manner* of exiſtence; there can therefore no eternal and unalterable relation exiſt, but of things that eternally and unalterably exiſt. Unleſs a thing may be ſaid to exiſt eternally and unalterably in ſuch a particular *ſtate* of nature, or *manner* of exiſtence, and yet have no eternal exiſtence.

When therefore he ſays again, *The will of God is always determined by the nature and reaſon of things* *; it is the ſame as if he had ſaid, the *omnipotence* of God is always determined by the *nature* of *cauſes* and *effects*. For as all cauſes and effects are what they are, and *owe* their *nature* to the omnipotence of God, ſo the relations of things are what they are, and owe their nature to the wiſdom and will of God.

Nor does this dependence of the relations of things on the will of God deſtroy the nature of relations, or make them doubtful, any more than the exiſtence of things depending on the *power* of God deſtroys the certainty of their exiſtence, or renders it doubtful. For as God cannot make things to exiſt, and not to exiſt at the ſame time, though their exiſtence depends upon his power, ſo neither can he make things to have ſuch relations, and yet not to have ſuch relations at the ſame time, though their relations depend upon his will.

So that the aſcribing the relations of things to the will of God, from whence alone they can proceed, brings no uncertainty to thoſe duties or rules of life which flow from ſuch relations,

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elations, but leaves the ſtate of nature with all its relations, and the duties which flow from them, in the greateſt certainty, ſo long as nature itſelf is continued; and when that either *ceaſes entirely*, or is only *altered*, it is not to be wondered at, if all its relations ceaſe, or are altered with it.

Our author ſays, *Dare any one ſay, that God's laws are not founded on the eternal reaſon of things* * ?

I dare ſay it with the ſame aſſurance, as that his *exiſtence* is not founded on the *eternal exiſtence* of things. And that it is the ſame extravagance to ſay, that God's laws are founded on the *eternal reaſons* of things, as to ſay, that his *power* is founded on the *eternal capacities* of things. For the *capacities* of things have juſt the ſame *ſolidity* and *eternity*, as the relations of things have, and are juſt ſuch *independent realities* as they are: And they are juſt the ſame *proper materials* to found the omnipotence of God upon, as the relations of things are to found his infinite wiſdom upon.

And as we can ſay, that the *omnipotence* of God in preſerving and ſupporting the creation will certainly act *ſuitably* to itſelf, and *conſiſtent* with that omnipotence which firſt made things be what they are, and put nature into ſuch a ſtate of cauſes and effects as it is in; ſo we can ſay, that the *infinite wiſdom* of God in giving laws to the world will act *ſuitably* to itſelf,

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itſelf, and *conſiſtent* with that wiſdom which at firſt made the *nature* and *relations* of the rational world be what they are.

But then as the *omnipotence* of God, though it acts ſuitably to the laws and ſtate of the creation, and the nature of cauſes and effects which it firſt ordained, yet cannot be ſaid to be founded upon the nature of cauſes and effects, becauſe neither cauſes nor effects have *any nature* but what they *owe* to omnipotence; ſo the infinite wiſdom of God, though in giving laws to the world it acts *ſuitably* to the natures and relations of rational beings, yet cannot be ſaid to be *founded* upon ſuch relations, becauſe ſuch relations are the *effects* of the divine wiſdom, and owe their exiſtence to it.

And the *reaſon* or *relations* of things ſhew God's *antecedent* wiſdom, and are effects of it, juſt as the nature of *cauſes* and *effects* ſhew his *antecedent* power, and are the effects of it. And as he is infinitely powerful, but not from the *nature* of cauſes and effects; ſo he is infinitely wiſe, but not from the *reaſon* and *nature* of things.

Again: If God is *infinite* wiſdom, then his wiſdom cannot be founded on the relations of things, unleſs things *finite*, and relations that began to be, can be the foundation of that wiſdom which is infinite, and could not begin to be.

And to aſk what the infinite wiſdom of God can be founded upon, if it is not found-

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ed upon the *natures* and *relations* of things, is the ſame abſurdity, as to aſk, How God's wiſdom could be *without* a beginning, if we cannot tell *how it began?* For if his wiſdom is infinite, it can no more be founded upon any thing, or have any reaſon of its exiſtence, than it can have any thing before it.

Therefore to aſk *what* it is founded upon, when it can have no foundation upon *any thing*, is aſking what an *independent* being is dependent upon, or *how* that began which could have *no* beginning?

And to aſk the reaſon or foundation of *any one* of the divine attributes, is the ſame as aſking the reaſon or foundation of them all. And to ſeek for the reaſon or foundation of *all* the divine attributes, is ſeeking for the *cauſe* of God's exiſtence.

And as we do not come to God's exiſtence, till we come to the *end* of *cauſes*, ſo nothing that is divine can be attributed to any cauſe.

Nor is it any more a contradiction to ſay, there is ſomething whoſe nature is without any cauſe or foundation of its exiſtence, than to ſay ſomething exiſts without ever *beginning* to exiſt. For as nothing can have a beginning, but as it proceeds from ſome cauſe; ſo that which can have no beginning, can have no cauſe. If therefore the divine wiſdom ever *began* to be *infinite*, and we could know when that beginning was, we ſhould have ſome pretence to ſearch for *that* upon which its infi-

nity was *founded*; but if it never could begin to be, then to ſeek for its reaſon, or foundation, is ſeeking for its beginning.

This writer affirms, that God's wiſdomand goodneſs muſt be founded on the nature and reaſon of things, otherwiſe it could not be proved that God was not an *arbitrary being*.

Now to ſeek for reaſons to prove that God is not an arbitrary being, that is, a being of the *higheſt freedom* and *independency*, that does every thing according to his *own will* and *pleaſure*, is as vain as to ſeek for reaſons to prove, that *all things* and *all natures* are not the effect of his *will*. For if every thing beſides God received its exiſtence from him; if every thing that exiſts, is the effect of his will, and he can do nothing, but becauſe he *wills* the doing it, muſt he not be free and arbitrary in as *high* a *manner* as he is powerful?

For if God is omnipotent, he muſt act according to his own will. And to ſay, that his *will* muſt be *governed* and *directed* by his wiſdom and goodneſs, is the ſame, as to ſay his omnipotence muſt be governed by ſomething *more powerful*. For if either his *will*, or his *omnipotence* wanted to be governed, there could be nothing to govern them; unleſs we could ſuppoſe, that he had a will *ſuperior* to his will, and a power *ſuperior* to his omnipotence. And though *will* and *power*, when conſidered as *blind* or *imperfect* faculties in men, may paſs for *humour* and *caprice*, yet as attributes of God, they have the *perfection* of God.

This

This *writer* ſays, *It is not in our power to love the Deity, whilſt we conſider him to be an arbitrary being, acting out of humour and caprice* *.

But if God's *will* is as *eſſentially* oppoſite to *humour* and *caprice*, as his *omnipotence* is eſſentially oppoſite to *weakneſs* and *inability*; then it is as abſurd to ſuppoſe that God muſt act according to humour and caprice, becauſe he acts according to his own will, as to ſuppoſe that he muſt act with inability, becauſe he acts by his omnipotence.

And if the will of God, *as ſuch*, is in the higheſt ſtate of perfection, then we have the *higheſt reaſon* to love and adore God, becauſe he is arbitrary, and acts according to his *own all-perfect will*. And if it be aſked, what it is that makes the will of God *all-perfect*, it may as well be aſked, what it is that makes him omnipotent, or makes him to exiſt. For, as it has been already obſerved, we have not found out a God, till we have found a being that has no *cauſe*; ſo we have not found the *will* of God, till we have found a *will* that has no *mover*, or *director*, or *cauſe* of its perfection. For that *will* which never began to be, can no more be any thing but what it is in itſelf, than it can begin to be.

And if any of God's attributes *wanted* to be governed and directed by the other, it might as well be ſaid that his infinite goodneſs was governed by his *will*, as that his will

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was governed by his goodneſs, becauſe he cannot be good againſt his will.

That which makes people imagine, that *will alone* is not ſo adorable, is becauſe they conſider it is a blind imperfect faculty that wants to be directed. But what has ſuch a will as this to do with the *will* of God?

For if the will of God is as *perfect* a *will*, as his omniſcience is a *perfect knowledge*, then we are as ſure that the *will* of God cannot want any direction, or *will* any thing amiſs, as we are that his omniſcience cannot need any information, or fall into any miſtake. And if the *will* of God wanted any direction or government, it is impoſſible it ſhould have it; for having no ſuperior, it could only be ſo governed, becauſe it *willed* it, and therefore muſt be always under its own government.

All the perfection therefore that can be aſcribed to God muſt be aſcribed to his *will*, not as if it was the production of his will (for nothing in God is produced) but as eternally, eſſentially, and infinitely inherent in it.

And as God's will has thus all the perfection of the divine nature, and has no rule, or reaſon, or motive to any goodneſs that comes from it, but its own *nature* and *ſtate* in God; ſo this great will is the only law of all creatures, and they are all to obey and conform to it, for this reaſon, becauſe it is the will of God.

Nothing

Nothing has a *ſufficient moral* reaſon, or fitneſs to be done, but becauſe it is the will of God that it ſhould be done.

It may be aſked, Is there then no *reaſon* or *nature* of things? Yes; as certainly as there are things. But the nature and reaſon of things, conſidered *independently* of the divine will, or *without* it, have no more *obligation* in them, than a *divine worſhip* conſidered independently of, and without any regard to the *exiſtence* of God. For the *will* of God is as abſolutely neceſſary to found all *moral obligation* upon, as the exiſtence of God is neceſſary to be the foundation of religious worſhip. And the fitneſs of *moral obligations*, without the *will* of God, is only like the fitneſs of a *religious* worſhip without the *exiſtence* of God.

And it is as juſt to ſay, that he deſtroys the *reaſon* of religion and piety, who founds it upon the nature and exiſtence of God, as to ſay, he ſaps the foundation of moral obligations, who founds them upon the will of God. And as religion cannot be juſtly or ſolidly defended, but by ſhewing its connexion with, and dependence upon God's exiſtence; ſo neither can moral obligations be aſſerted with ſtrength and reaſon, but by ſhewing them to be the will of God.

It may again be aſked, Can God make that fit in *itſelf* which is in *itſelf abſolutely* unfit to be done?

This queſtion conſiſts of improper terms. For God's will no more makes actions to be fit *in themſelves*, than it makes *things* to exiſt *in or of themſelves*. No things, nor any actions have any *abſolute* fitneſs of and in *themſelves*.

A *gift*, a *blow*, the making a *wound*, or *ſhedding of blood*, conſidered in themſelves, have no *abſolute* fitneſs, but are fit or unfit according to any variety of accidental circumſtances.

When therefore God by his will makes any thing fit to be done, he does not make the thing fit in *itſelf*, which is juſt in the *ſame ſtate*, conſidered in *itſelf*, that it was before, but it becomes fit for the perſon to do it, becauſe he can only be happy, or do that which is fit for him to do, by doing the will of God.

For inſtance, the *bare eating* a fruit, conſidered in *itſelf*, is neither fit nor unfit. If a fruit is appointed by God for our food and nouriſhment, then it is as fit to eat it, as to preſerve our lives. If a fruit is poiſonous, then it is as unfit to eat it, as to commit ſelf-murder. If eating of a fruit is prohibited by an expreſs order of God, then it is as unfit to eat it, as to eat our own damnation.

But in none of theſe inſtances is the eating or not eating, conſidered in *itſelf*, *fit* or *unfit*, but has all its fitneſs, or unfitneſs, from ſuch circum-

circumſtances, as are entirely owing to the will of God.

Suppoſing therefore God to require a perſon to do ſomething, which according to his preſent circumſtances, *without* that command, he ought not to do, God does not make that which is *abſolutely* unfit in *itſelf*, fit to be done, but only adds *new circumſtances* to an action, that is neither fit, nor unfit, moral, nor immoral in *itſelf*, but *becauſe* of its circumſtances.

To inſtance in the caſe of *Abraham*, required to ſacrifice his ſon. The killing of a man is neither good nor bad, conſidered *abſolutely* in *itſelf*. It was unlawful for *Abraham* to kill his ſon, becauſe of the *circumſtances* he was in with regard to his ſon. But when the divine command was given, *Abraham* was in a *new ſtate*, the action had *new circumſtances*, and then it was as lawful for *Abraham* to kill his ſon, as it was lawful for God to require any man's life, either by *ſickneſs*, or any *other means* he ſhould pleaſe to appoint.

And it had been as unlawful for *Abraham* to have diſobeyed God in this extraordinary command, as to have curſed God at any *ordinary calamity* of providence.

Again, it is objected, *If there is nothing right or wrong, good or bad, antecedently and independently of the will of God, there can then be no reaſon why God ſhould will, or command one thing rather than another.*

It is anſwered, *firſt*, That all goodneſs, and all poſſible perfection is as *eternal* as God,

and as eſſential to him as his exiſtence. And to ſay that they are either *antecedent* or *conſonant*, *dependent* or *independent* of his will, would be equally abſurd. To aſk therefore, whether there is not ſomething right and wrong antecedent to the will of God, to render his will *capable* of being right, is as abſurd as to aſk for ſome antecedent cauſe of his exiſtence, that he may be proved to exiſt neceſſarily. And to aſk, how God can be good if there is not ſomething good independently of him, is aſking how he can be infinite, if there be not ſomething infinite independently of him. And to ſeek for any other *ſource* of *reaſon* of the divine goodneſs, beſides the divine nature, is like ſeeking for ſome external cauſe and help of the divine omnipotence.

The goodneſs and wiſdom therefore by which God is wiſe and good, and to which all his works of wiſdom and goodneſs are owing, are neither *antecedent*, nor *conſequent* to his will.

Secondly, Nothing is more certain, than that all *moral obligations*, and *duties* of creatures towards one another, *began* with the exiſtence of moral creatures. This is as certain, as that all *phyſical relations*, and corporeal qualities and effects *began* with the exiſtence of bodies.

As therefore nothing has the nature of a cauſe or effect, nothing has any quality of any kind in bodies, but what is entirely owing to matter ſo created and conſtituted by the

the *will* of God; ſo it is equally certain, that no actions have any *moral qualities*, but what are wholly owing to that ſtate and nature in which they are created by the will of God.

Moral obligations therefore of creatures have the ſame *origin*, and the *ſame reaſon* that natural qualities and effects have in the corporeal world, *viz.* the ſole will of God. And as in a different ſtate of matter bodies would have had different qualities and effects; ſo in a different ſtate of rational beings, there would be different moral obligations, and nothing could be right or good in their behaviour, but what began then to be right and good, becauſe they then began to exiſt in ſuch a ſtate and condition of life. And as their ſtate and condition could have no other cauſe or reaſon of their exiſtence, but the ſole will of God, ſo the cauſe and reaſon of right and wrong in ſuch a ſtate, muſt be equally owing to the will of God.

The pretended *abſolute independent fitneſſes*, or *unfitneſſes* of actions therefore *in themſelves*, are vain *abſtractions*, and philoſophical *jargon*, ſerving no ends of morality, but only helping people to wrangle and diſpute away that ſincere obedience to God, which is their only happineſs. But to make theſe imaginary *abſolute fitneſſes* the *common law* both of God and man, is ſtill more extravagant. Forif the *circumſtances* of actions give them their *moral nature*, ſurely God muſt firſt be in our circumſtances,

cumſtances, before that which is a law to us can be the ſame law to him.

And if a father may require that of a ſon, which his ſon, becauſe of his *different ſtate*, cannot require of his brother; ſurely that which God may require of us, may be as different from that which a father may require of a ſon, as God is different from a father.

Thus this writer ſpeaking of the law founded on abſolute fitneſſes, ſays, *It is a law by which God governs his own actions, and expects that all the rational world ſhould govern theirs* *. And leſt you ſhould think that God is not in the ſame ſtate of neceſſary ſubjection and obedience to this law, he farther adds, *that God cannot diſpenſe, either with his creatures, or himſelf, for not obſerving it* †.

Now to ſay, that the *reaſon* of things is the ſame law to God that it is to us, is ſaying, that God is in the *ſame ſtate* with *regard* to the nature of things as we are. For as things are a law to us, becauſe we are in *ſuch* a ſtate, if they are the *ſame law* to God, it muſt be becauſe God is in the ſame ſtate that we are.

Again; if God is as much under a law as we are, then he is as much under authority; for law can no more be without authority, than without a law-giver. And if God and we are under the *ſame law*, we muſt be under the *ſame authority*.

But as God cannot be under any law in common with us his creatures, any more than he

* *Page* 59. † *Page* 189.

he can be of the ſame rank or order with us; ſo neither can he be under any law at all, any more than he can be under any authority at all.

For that which is the *rule*, or *reaſon* of God's actions, is no more different from his own will, than his power is different from his will.

And though God is not to be looked upon as an *arbitrary being*, in the ſenſe of this author, who will not diſtinguiſh arbitrary from *humour* and *caprice*; yet in a better, and only true ſenſe of the word when applied to God, he muſt be affirmed to be an arbitrary being, that acts only from himſelf, from his *own will*, and according to his *own pleaſure*.

And we have no more reaſon to be afraid to be left to a God without a law, than to a God that had no beginning; or to be left to his will and pleaſure, than to be left under the protection and care of a being, that is all love, and mercy, and goodneſs. For as the exiſtence of God, as ſuch, neceſſarily implies the exiſtence of all perfection; ſo the will of God, as ſuch, neceſſarily implies the *willing* every thing that *all perfection* can will.

And as the exiſtence of God, becauſe it contains all perfection, cannot for that reaſon have any external cauſe; ſo the will of God, becauſe it is *all perfection*, cannot, for that reaſon, have any external *rule* or *direction*. But his own will is wiſdom, and his wiſdom is his will.

will. His goodneſs is arbitrary, and his arbitrarineſs is goodneſs.

To bring God therefore into a ſtate of moral obligation and ſubjection to any external *law* or *rule*, as we are, has all the abſurdity of ſuppoſing him to be a finite, dependent, temporary, imperfect, improveable, governable being as we are.

But this writer does not only thus bring God into this ſtate of law and obligation with us, but makes farther advances in the ſame kind of errors.

Hence, ſays he, *we may contemplate the great dignity of our rational nature, ſince our reaſon for* kind, *though not for degree, is of the* ſame nature *with* that of God's *.

Here you ſee *our reaſon*, that is, our *faculty* of reaſoning, for reaſon cannot be called *ours* in any other reſpect, has no other difference from reaſon as it is in God, but that of degree. But what greater abſurdity can a man fall into, than to ſuppoſe that a being whoſe exiſtence had a beginning but a few years ago, differs only in degree from that which could not *poſſibly* have a beginning; or that a *dependent* and *independent* being ſhould not be different in *kind*, but *only* in degree. For if nothing that had a beginning can be without a beginning; if nothing that is dependent can be independent, then no faculties or powers of dependent beings, that began to be, can be of the *ſame kind*

* *Page* 24.

kind with the powers of that independent being, that could not begin to be.

For to ſay that the faculties of a dependent and independent being may be of the ſame kind, is as flat a contradiction, as to ſay the ſame kind of thing may be dependent and independent, as it is the ſame kind of thing.

How extravagant would he be, who ſhould affirm *exiſtence*, *life*, *happineſs*, and *power* to be of the ſame *kind* and *nature* in us, as they are in God, and only to differ in degree?

And yet it would be more extravagant to ſuppoſe, that though God cannot *poſſibly* have our *kind* of *exiſtence*, *life*, *happineſs*, and *power*, yet he muſt have *our kind* of reaſon.

Reaſon belongs to God and man, juſt as *power*, *exiſtence*, *life*, and *happineſs* belong to God and man. And he that can from happineſs being common to God and man, prove our happineſs to be of the *ſame kind* and nature with God's, may alſo prove reaſon in God and man to be of the ſame kind.

This writer indeed ſays, *Our happineſs is limited*, becauſe *our reaſon is ſo*; and that God has *unlimited happineſs*, becauſe *he alone has unlimited reaſon* *.

But if that which is *neceſſarily limited* is certainly different from that which is *neceſſarily unlimited*, then we have proof enough from this very argument, that a reaſon *neceſſarily*

* *Page* 24.

ceſſarily limited, cannot be of the *ſame kind* with that reaſon which is *neceſſarily* unlimited. Unleſs it can be ſaid, that neceſſary and unneceſſary, limited and unlimited, finite and infinite, beginning and unbeginning, have no contrariety in *kind*, but only differ, as a *ſhort* line differs from a *long* one.

The truth of the matter is this; reaſon is in God and man, as power is in God and man. And as the divine power has ſome degree of likeneſs to human power, yet with an *infinite* difference from it; ſo that perfection which we call *reaſon* in God, has ſome degree of likeneſs to reaſon as it is in man, yet is *infinitely* and beyond all conception different from it.

Nor can any one ſhew, that we enjoy reaſon in a *higher degree* in reſpect of God, than we enjoy power; or that the *manner*, or *light* of our reaſon bears any greater likeneſs to the light and knowledge of God, than the *manner* and *extent* of our power bear to the omnipotence of God.

And as our enjoyment of power is ſo limited, ſo imperfect, ſo ſuperficial, as to be ſcarce ſufficient to tell us what power is, much leſs what omnipotence is; ſo our ſhare of reaſon is ſo ſmall, and we enjoy it in ſo imperfect a manner, that we can ſcarce think or talk intelligibly of it, or ſo much as define our own faculties of reaſoning.

CHAP. II.

Shewing, from the ſtate *and* relation *between God and man, that human reaſon cannot poſſibly be a competent judge of the* fitneſs *and* reaſonableneſs *of God's proceeding with mankind, either as to the* time, *or* matter, *or* manner *of any external revelation.*

AS our author has laid it down as an undeniable rule of God's actions, that he muſt, if he be a wiſe and good being, act according to the relation he ſtands in towards his creatures; ſo I proceed upon this principle, to prove the incapacity of *human reaſon* to judge *truly* of God's proceedings in regard to divine revelation.

For if the fitneſs of actions *reſults from the nature and relations* of beings, then the *fitneſs* of God's actions, as he is an *omniſcient creator* and *governor* (to whom every thing is *eternally foreknown*) over beings endued with *our freedom of will*, muſt be to us very incomprehenſible.

We

We are not ſo much as capable of comprehending by our own reaſon the *poſſibility* of this relation, or how the foreknowledge of God can conſiſt with the free agency of creatures. We know that God foreknows all things, with the ſame certainty as we know there is a God. And if *ſelf-conſciouſneſs* is an infallible proof of our own exiſtence, it proves with the ſame certainty the freedom of our will. And hence it is, that we have a full aſſurance of the conſiſtency of God's foreknowledge with freedom of will.

Now this *incomprehenſible* relation between an *eternally foreknowing creator* and *governor* and his free creatures, is the *relation* from whence ariſes the *fitneſs* of God's providence over us. But if the *relation* itſelf is incomprehenſible, then thoſe actions that have their *fitneſs* from it muſt ſurely be incomprehenſible. Nothing can be fit for God to do, either in *Creation* or *Providence*, but what has its fitneſs founded in his own *fore-knowledge* of every thing that would follow from *every kind* of creation, and *every manner* of providence: But if nothing can be fit, but becauſe it is according to *this fore-knowledge* of *every thing* that would follow from *every kind* of creation, and *every manner* of providence; then we have the utmoſt certainty, that the *fitneſs* of God's actions as a *fore-knowing Creator* and *Governor* of free agents, muſt be founded upon *reaſons* that we cannot *poſſibly* know any thing of.

And

And a *child*, that has but juſt learned to ſpeak, is as well qualified to ſtate the fitneſs of the laws of *matter* and *motion* by which the whole *vegetable* world is preſerved, as the wiſeſt of men is qualified to comprehend, or ſtate the fitneſs of the methods or proceedings which a *fore-knowing providence* obſerves over free agents. For every reaſon on which the fitneſs of ſuch a providence is founded, is not only *unknown* to us, but by a neceſſity of nature *impoſſible* to be known by us.

For if the *fitneſs* of God's acting in this, or that manner, is founded in his *fore knowledge* of every thing that would *happen* from *every poſſible way* of acting, *then* it is juſt as abſolutely impoſſible for us to know the reaſons on which the fitneſs of his actions are founded, as it is impoſſible for us to be omniſcient.

What human reaſon can tell what kind of beings it is *fit* and *reaſonable* for God to create, on the account of his own *eternal fore-knowledge?* And yet this is as poſſible, as for the ſame reaſon to tell how God ought to govern beings already created, on the account of his own eternal fore-knowledge; and yet God can neither *create*, nor *govern* his creatures, as it is *fit* and reaſonable he ſhould, unleſs he creates and governs them in *this* or *that* manner, on the *account* of his own fore-knowledge. And therefore, if he acts *like* himſelf, and *worthy* of his own nature, the fitneſs of his proceedings muſt for this very reaſon, *be-*

cauſe they are fit, be vaſtly above our comprehenſion.

Who can tell what *different kinds* of rational creatures, diſtinguiſhed by variety of natures and faculties, it is fit and reaſonable for God to create, becauſe he *eternally foreſaw* what would be the *effect* of ſuch different creations? Who can explain the *fitneſs* of that vaſt *variety* there is amongſt rational creatures of the *ſame ſpecies*, in their rational faculties, or ſhew that all their different faculties ought to be as they are? And yet the *fitneſs* of this providence has its *certain reaſon* in the divine fore-knowledge, and it could not be fit but becauſe of it.

Who can tell what *degree* of reaſon rational creatures ought to enjoy, *becauſe* they are rational; or what degrees of *new* and *revealed* knowledge it is fit and reaſonable for God to give, or not give them, becauſe they ſeem or ſeem not to themſelves to want it, are diſpoſed or not diſpoſed to receive it? For as mankind cannot tell why it was *fit* and *reaſonable* for God to create them of ſuch a *kind* and *degree* as they are of; ſo neither can they tell how God ought, or ought not to add to their natural knowledge, and make them as *differently accountable* for the uſe of revealed rules of life, as for the uſe of their natural faculties.

And as the reaſon why God created them of *ſuch* a *kind*, and with *ſuch faculties*, was becauſe of his own fore-knowledge of the *effects* of

of ſuch a creation; ſo if ever he does reveal to them any *ſupernatural* knowledge, both the doing it, the *time*, and *matter* and *manner* of it, muſt have their *fitneſs* in his own *eternal fore-knowledge* of the effects of ſuch a revelation.

The reaſons therefore on which the *fitneſs* of this or that revelation, *why* or *when*, of *what matter*, in *what manner*, and to *whom* it is to be made, muſt, from the nature and reaſon of things, be as unſearchable by us, as the reaſons of *this* or *that* creation of rational beings, at ſuch a *time*, of ſuch a *kind*, in ſuch a *manner*, and in ſuch a *ſtate*.

This may help us to an eaſy ſolution of thoſe unreaſonable queſtions, which this writer puts in this manner.

If the deſign of God in communicating any thing of himſelf to men was their happineſs, would not that deſign have obliged him, who at all times alike deſires their happineſs, to have at all times alike communicated it to them? If God always acts for the good of his creatures, what reaſon can be aſſigned, why he ſhould not from the beginning have diſcovered ſuch things as make for their good, but defer the doing it till the time of Tiberius; *ſince the ſooner this was done, the greater would his goodneſs appear*?*

And again, *How is it conſiſtent with the notion of God's being univerſally benevolent, not to have revealed it to all his children, when all*

* *Page* 393.

had equal need of it? Was it not as eaſy for him to have communicated it to all nations, as to any one nation or perſon; or in all languages, as in one † *?*

Now all this is fully anſwered by our author's own great and fundamental principle.

For if the relation between things and perſons, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence, be the ſole rule of God's actions ‖, as he expreſly affirms; then the *ſole rule* or reaſon of God's revealing any thing to any man, or men, at any time, muſt have its *fitneſs reſulting* from the divine fore-knowledge of the effects of *ſuch* a revelation, at *ſuch* a time, and to *ſuch* perſons. If God does not act thus, he does not act according to the *relation* betwixt a *fore-knowing Creator*, and his free creatures. But if he does act according to a *fitneſs reſulting* from this *relation*, and makes, or does not make revelations, according to his own fore-knowledge of the fitneſs of times and perſons for them; then to aſk how a God, *always equally* good, can make a revelation at *any* time, and not make the *ſame* at *all* times, is as abſurd as to aſk, how a God, always equally good, can reveal that at one time, becauſe it is a *proper* time for it, and not reveal it at every other time, though every other time is *improper* for it.

God's goodneſs, directed by his own fore-knowledge of the *fitneſs* of times, and of the *ſtate* and *actions* of free agents, deferred a certain

† *Page* 196. ‖ *Page* 28.

tain revelation to the time of *Tiberius*, becauſe he *foreſaw* it would then be an act of the *greateſt* goodneſs, and have its *beſt effects* upon the world: To aſk therefore, *what reaſon can be aſſigned* why ſo good and beneficial a revelation was not *ſooner*, or even from the *beginning* made to the world, is aſking, *What reaſon can be aſſigned* why God is good, and intends the *greateſt* good by what he does, or ſtays for the doing any thing till ſuch time, as makes it a greater good than if he had done it ſooner; it is aſking, why God ſhould act according to his *own fore-knowledge* of the *ſtate* and *actions* of *free agents*, and order all things according to a fitneſs reſulting from ſuch a fore-knowledge.

Theſe queſtions ſuppoſe, that if God ſhewed his *goodneſs* to mankind by a revelation at ſuch time, he muſt be *wanting* in goodneſs before that time, becauſe he did not make it *ſooner*; whereas if his deferring it till *ſuch* a time was owing to his *fore-knowledge* of the actions and ſtate of free agents, and of the *effects* of his revelation, and becauſe it would then have its *beſt effects*, then God is proved to be *equally* good before he made it, for this very reaſon, becauſe he did not make it before its *proper* time; and he had been wanting in goodneſs, if he had not *deferred* it till that time.

Now this appealing to God's fore-knowledge of the ſtate and actions of *free agents*, as the cauſe of all that is particular in the *time* and *manner* of any revelation, and deducing its

fitneſs from thence, cannot be ſaid to be *begging the queſtion* in diſpute, but is reſolving it directly according to the *rule* which this writer lays down for God to act by, which is this: That *the relations between things and perſons*, and *the fitneſs reſulting from thence*, *muſt be the ſole rule of God's actions, unleſs he be an arbitrary being*.

But if this is the *ſole rule*, then God in giving any revelation, muſt act as the *relation* betwixt a *fore-knowing* Creator and his *free* creatures requires; and his actions muſt have their *fitneſs reſulting* from his fore-knowledge of the *ſtate* and *actions* of free agents. And if this is God's ſole rule, made neceſſary to him from the nature of things, then to aſk why *this* or *that* revelation is *only* at *ſuch* a time, is to aſk why God *only* does that which is *fit* for him to do. And to aſk, why not the ſame revelation at any other time, is aſking why God does not do that, which it is *not fit* for him to do.

This writer aſks, *How is it conſiſtent with the notion of God's being univerſally benevolent, not to have revealed it to all his children, who had equal need of it?* But if they had *equal need* of it, yet if they were not *equally fit* for it, but prepared only to have their guilt increaſed by it, and ſo be expoſed to a greater damnation by refuſing it, then God's goodneſs to them is very manifeſt by with-holding ſuch information from them, and reſerving it for thoſe that would be made happier by it.

Judas

Judas and *Pontius Pilate*, and the *Jews* that called for our Saviour's crucifixion, had *equal need* of a Saviour with thoſe that believed in him. *Chorazin* and *Bethſaida* wanted the light of the Goſpel as much as thoſe that received it; but if the reſt of the world had been, at that time, as much indiſpoſed for the light of the Goſpel as they were, God's goodneſs had been greater to that age, if he had left them as they were, and reſerved the light of the Goſpel till a better age had ſucceeded.

So that this argument founded on the *equal need* of all, or former ages, has no force, unleſs it could be ſhewn that the ſame revelation made to any of theſe former ages, would have produced all thoſe good effects, which God foreſaw would follow from its being reſerved for ſuch a *particular time* and *ſtate* of things and perſons.

He aſks again, *Was it not as eaſy for God to have communicated it to all nations, as to any one nation or perſon? Or in all languages, as in any one?* This argument is built upon the *truth* and *reaſonableneſs* of this ſuppoſition, That God does things becauſe they are *eaſy*, or forbears things becauſe they are *difficult* to be performed. For it can be no argument that God ought to have revealed ſuch things to *all* nations or perſons, becauſe it was as *eaſy* to him as to do it to *any one* nation or perſon; unleſs it be ſuppoſed, that the *eaſineſs* of a thing is a reaſon why God does it, and the difficulty of a thing a reaſon why he does not do it. But

if this ſuppoſition be very abſurd, then the argument founded upon it muſt be liable to the ſame charge.

But if God does things, not becauſe they are eaſy, but becauſe they are infinitely good and fit to be done, and founded in the *relation* of a fore-knowing Creator to his free creatures; then the reaſon why God has afforded different revelations to different ages and perſons, is this, That his *manner* of revealing every thing might be *worthy* of his own *fore-knowledge* of the effects of it, and that every thing that is particular in the *time* or *manner* of any revelation, might have its *fitneſs reſulting* from the *relation* betwixt a good God and his creatures, whoſe *changing* ſtate, *different* conduct, *tempers* and *actions*, are all eternally fore-known by him.

If it ſhould here be ſaid, that this *writer* only means, that it is as *poſſible* for God to make the ſame revelation have the *ſame* effects, and produce *as much* good in one age as in another;

This is only ſaying, It is as *poſſible* for God to *deſtroy* the difference of times and ſtates, to *over-rule* the nature of things, and turn all mankind into *mere machines*, as it is to govern and preſide over them according to their natures. For if the natures of things are not to be deſtroyed; if the *nature*, and *ſtate*, and *tempers* of men, and the *freedom* of their wills are to be ſuffered to act according to themſelves; then to ſay, it is as poſſible for God to make

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the ſame revelation to have the ſame effect in one age as in another, is as abſurd as to ſay, it is as poſſible for him to make the *ſame heat* of the *Sun* have the ſame effects upon any one place of the earth, that it has upon another upon *rocks* and *barren ſands*, as it has upon a fertile ſoil, without altering the nature of *rocks* and *ſands*.

Again; it is objected, that a divine revelation muſt either be the effect of *juſtice*, or elſe of *mercy* and *free goodneſs*; but in either of theſe caſes it ought to be *univerſal*; for juſtice muſt be done to all. But if it is the effect of *mercy* and *free goodneſs*, this writer aſks, *How a being can be denominated merciful and good, who is ſo only to a few, but cruel and unmerciful to the reſt* * ?

It is anſwered, That there is neither *juſtice* in God without mercy, nor *mercy* without juſtice; and to aſcribe a *revelation* to either of them ſeparately, in *contradiſtinction* to the other, has no more truth or reaſon in it, than to aſcribe the *creation* ſeparately either to the *Wiſdom*, or *Power* of God, in contradiſtinction to the other.

Secondly, A divine revelation is not owing to the *juſtice* or *free goodneſs* of God, either *ſeparately* or *jointly* conſidered; but to the goodneſs, mercy, and juſtice of God, *governed* and *directed* by his eternal fore-knowledge of all

* *Page.* 401.

all the effects of every revelation, at any, or all times.

God ordains a revelation in this, or that manner, time, and place; not becauſe it is a *juſtice* that he cannot refuſe, not becauſe it is matter of *favour* or *free* goodneſs, and therefore may be given in any manner at pleaſure; but becauſe he has the whole *duration* of human things, the whole *race* of mankind, the whole *order* of human changes and events, the whole *combination* of all cauſes and effects of human tempers, all the *actions* of free agents, and *all the conſequences* of every revelation plainly in his ſight; and according to this eternal fore-knowledge, every revelation receives every thing that is *particular* in it, either as to *time*, *matter*, *manner*, or *place*.

He ſhews his goodneſs in a revelation to *this part* of the world, not becauſe it is a *part* that *alone* wants it, not becauſe he can beſtow his *favours* as he pleaſes, but becauſe by acting *ſo* with *ſuch* a part he *beſt* ſhews his goodneſs and regard to the *whole*. He reveals himſelf at *ſuch* a *time*, not becauſe he at *that time* begins to have a *partial* or *particular* kindneſs, but becauſe by ſo *timing* his goodneſs he *beſt ſhews* his care and goodneſs throughout the *whole duration* of human things, from the beginning to the end of the world. And it is becauſe he had the *ſame good* will towards mankind in *every age*, that he does what he does in any *particular* age.

And

And if by the *particular* time and manner of any revelation the *whole race* of mankind receives more benefit from it; if more are raiſed to happineſs by it, and fewer are made miſerable by a blameable *uſing* or *refuſing* it, than could have happened by *any other* time, or manner of giving it to the World conſiſtent with the natural freedom of men; then God, by being particular in the time and place of giving it, is not merciful to a *few*, and cruel to *many*, but is *moſt* merciful to *all*; becauſe he only choſe *ſuch time*, and *place*, and *perſons*, becauſe *all* would receive more benefit from it, than they poſſibly could from the choice of any other time, or place, or perſons.

All complaints therefore about that which is *particular*, or *ſeemingly* partial in the time and manner of any revelation, are very unjuſtifiable; and ſhew that we are diſcontent at God's proceedings, becauſe he acts like himſelf, does what is *beſt* and *fitteſt* to be done, and governs the world, not according to our weak imaginations, but according to his own infinite perfections.

We will not allow a Providence to be *right*, unleſs we can comprehend and explain the reaſonableneſs of all its ſteps; and yet it could not *poſſibly* be right, unleſs its proceedings were as much *above* our comprehenſion, as our wiſdom is *below* that which is infinite.

For if the *relations* of *things* and *perſons*, and the *fitneſs* reſulting from thence, be the *rule* of God's

God's actions; then all the revelations that come from God, muſt have their *fitneſs* reſulting from the relation his fore-knowledge bears to the *various ſtates, conditions, tempers,* and *actions* of free agents, and the *various effects* of every manner of revelation.

But if God cannot act worthy of himſelf in any manner of revelation, unleſs he acts according to a fitneſs reſulting from this relation; then we have the higheſt certainty, that he muſt act by a *rule* that lies out of our ſight, and that his Providence in this particular muſt be incomprehenſible to us; for this very reaſon, becauſe it has that very fitneſs, wiſdom and goodneſs in it, that it ought to have.

CHAP. III.

Shewing how far human reaſon is enabled to judge of the reaſonableneſs, truth and certainty of divine Revelation.

THE former chapter has plainly ſhewn, from the ſtate and relation between God and man, that we muſt be ſtrangers to the true reaſons on which a divine revelation is

is founded, both as to its *time*, *matter*, and *manner*.

But it is here objected, *If God by reaſon of his own perfections muſt be thus myſterious and incomprehenſible, both in the matter and manner of divine revelation. How can we know what revelations we are to receive as divine? How can we be blamed for rejecting this, or receiving that, if we cannot comprehend the reaſons on which every revelation is founded, both as to its matter and manner.*

Juſt as we may be blamed for ſome notions of God, and commended for others, though we can have no notions of God but ſuch as are myſterious and inconceivable. We are not without ſome natural capacity of judging right of God, of finding out his perfections, and proving what is, or is not worthy to be aſcribed to him. Yet what the divine perfections are in themſelves, what they imply and contain in their own nature and manner of exiſtence is altogether myſterious and inconceivable by us at preſent. If therefore a man may be blameable, or commendable, for his right or wrong belief of a God, then a man may be accountable for a right or wrong belief of ſuch matters, as are in their own nature too myſterious for his comprehenſion. And though a man knows the reaſons of a divine revelation, either as to its *matter* or *manner*, as imperfectly as he knows the divine nature; yet he may be as liable to account for believing *falſe revelations*, as for *idolatry*, and as full of guilt for rejecting

ing a *true revelation*, as for denying the only *true God*.

Secondly, Though we are inſufficient for comprehending the *reaſons* on which the particular *matter* or *manner* of any divine revelation is founded, yet we may be ſo far ſufficient judges of the *reaſons* for *receiving* or not *receiving* a revelation as divine, as to make our conduct therein juſtly accountable to God.

For if God can ſhew a revelation to proceed from him, by the *ſame undeniable* evidence, as he ſhews the *creation* to be his *work*; if he can make himſelf as viſible in a *particular extraordinary* manner, as he is by his *general* and *ordinary* providence; then, though we are as unqualified to judge of the myſteries of a *revelation*, as we are to judge of the myſteries in *creation* and *providence*; yet we may be as fully obliged to receive a revelation, as to acknowledge the creation to be the work of God, and as highly criminal for diſbelieving it, as for denying a general Providence.

Adam, *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *Moſes* were very incompetent judges of the reaſons on which the particular revelations made to them were founded; but this did not hinder their ſufficient aſſurance that ſuch revelations came from God, becauſe they were proved to come from God in the ſame manner, and for the ſame reaſons, as the creation is proved to be the Work of God.

And

And as *Adam* and *Noah* muſt ſee every thing wonderful, myſterious, and above their comprehenſions in thoſe new worlds into which they were introduced by God; ſo they could no more expect that he ſhould require nothing of them, but what they would enjoin themſelves, than that their own *frame*, the *nature* of the creation, the *providence* of God, or the *ſtate* of human life ſhould be exactly as they would have it.

And if their poſterity will let no *meſſages* from heaven, no *prophecies* and *miracles* perſuade them, that God can call them to any duties but ſuch they muſt enjoin themſelves; or to the belief of any doctrines but ſuch as their own minds can ſuggeſt; nor to any methods of changing their preſent ſtate of weakneſs and diſorder for a happy immortality, but ſuch as ſuit their own *taſte*, *temper*, and way of reaſoning; it is becauſe they are grown ſenſeleſs of the myſteries of creation and providence with which they are ſurrounded, and forget the awful prerogative of infinite wiſdom over the weakeſt, loweſt rank of intelligent beings.

For the *excellence* of a revelation is to be acknowledged by us, for the ſame reaſon that we are to acknowledge the excellence of creation and providence; not becauſe they are wholly according to human conception, and have no myſteries, but becauſe they are proved to be of God.

And

And a revelation is to be received as coming from God, not becauſe of its internal excellence, or becauſe we judge it to be worthy of God; but becauſe God has declared it to be his, in as *plain* and *undeniable* a manner, as he has declared *creation* and *providence* to be his.

For though no revelation can come from God, but what is truly worthy of him, and full of every internal excellence; yet what is truly *worthy* of God to be *revealed* cannot poſſibly be known by us, but by a revelation from himſelf.

And as we can only know what is worthy of God in creation, by knowing what he has created; ſo we can no other way poſſibly know what is worthy of God to be revealed, but by a revelation. And he that pretends, independently of any revelation, to ſhew *how*, and in what manner God ought to make a revelation worthy of himſelf, is as great a *Viſionary*, as he that ſhould pretend, independently of the creation, or without learning any thing from it, to ſhew how God ought to have proceeded in it, to make it worthy of himſelf. For as God alone, knows how to create worthy of himſelf, and nothing can poſſibly be proved to be worthy to be created by him, but becauſe he has already created it; ſo God alone knows what is worthy of himſelf in a revelation, and nothing can poſſibly be proved worthy to be revealed by him, but becauſe he has already revealed it.

Hence

Hence we may ſee how little this *writer* is governed by the *reaſon* and *nature* of things, who proceeds upon this as an undeniable principle, that we could not know a revelation to be divine, unleſs we knew, antecedently to revelation, what God could teach or require of us by it. Thus, ſays he, *Were we not capable by our reaſon of knowing what the divine goodneſs could command, or forbid his creatures, antecedently to any external revelation, we could not diſtinguiſh the true inſtituted religion from the* many *falſe ones* *.

Juſt as *wild* and *viſionary*, as if it was ſaid, Were we not capable by our reaſon of knowing what kind or order of beings God *ought* to create, *independently* of any thing we learn from the creation, we could never prove this or that creation to proceed from him. Did we not, antecedently to facts and experience, know by our own reaſon what ought to be the method and manner of divine providence, we could never prove that the providence which governs nations and perſons is a divine providence.

For if a revelation could have no proof that it was divine, unleſs we by our reaſon, *antecedently* to *all* revelation, knew *all* that *any* revelation could contain, or require of us; then it undeniably follows, that no *providence* or *creation* could be proved to be divine, unleſs we by our reaſon, *independently* of creation and providence, could tell what *kind* of beings

* *Page* 66.

God ought to create, or what *manner* of providence he ought to obſerve.

For that which cannot be aſcribed to God in revelation, becauſe it is unworthy of his wiſdom and goodneſs, cannot be aſcribed to God in creation and providence.

Again; He proceeds to ſhew that a revelation from God cannot contain any thing, but what human reaſon can prove from the nature of things; for this reaſon, becauſe if God could require any thing more of us than what our own reaſon could thus prove, he muſt then require *without* reaſon, be *arbitrary* being, and then there is an end of all religion.

Now this argument proceeds thus; If God does not act according to the *meaſure* of *human* reaſon, he cannot act according to *reaſon itſelf*. If he requires any thing more of us than what we *think* the nature of things requires of us, then he cannot act according to the nature of things. If he makes any thing a rule or law to us, which we would not impoſe upon ourſelves, then he muſt make laws by *mere will*, without any reaſon for them. If he requires us to believe any thing of his own nature, or our nature, more than we could have known of ourſelves, then he muſt act by *caprice* and *humour*, and be an arbitrary being. If his *infinite* wiſdom is in any matters of revelation *greater* than ours; if it is not in every thing he reveals *meaſurable* by ours, it cannot be

wiſdom at all, much leſs can it be infinite wiſdom.

That is, if he is *more powerful* than we are, he cannot be *omnipotent*; if he is *more perfect* than we are, he cannot be *all perfection*; if he acts upon *greater*, or *higher*, or *more* reaſonable motives than we do, he cannot be a *reaſonable* being.

Now if theſe abſurdities are not plain and manifeſt to every common underſtanding, it is in vain to diſpute about any thing; but if they are, then it is as plain, this writer's great argument againſt Chriſtianity, and firſt principle of his *rational religion*, is in the ſame ſtate of undeniable abſurdity, as being ſolely built upon them.

Thus, ſays he, *Natural religion takes in all thoſe duties which flow from the reaſon and the nature of things* *. That is, natural religion takes in all thoſe things that bare human reaſon can of itſelf diſcover from the nature of things. This is granted; but what follows? Why, ſays he, *Conſequently, was there an inſtituted religion which differs from that of nature, its precepts muſt be arbitrary, as not founded on the nature and reaſon of things, but depending on mere will and pleaſure, otherwiſe it would be the ſame with natural religion* †.

That is, ſince natural religion contains all that bare human reaſon can of itſelf diſcover, if God was to reveal any thing more than hu-

* *Page* 114. † *Page* 16.

man reaſon can diſcover, he muſt be an arbitrary being, and act by mere will and pleaſure; otherwiſe his revelation would be the ſame with, and nothing more than human reaſon.

Here you ſee all the abſurdities juſt mentioned, are expreſly contained in this argument God is all *humour*, *caprice*, and *mere arbitrary will*, if his revelation is not ſtrictly, in every reſpect, the ſame with human reaſon. That is, he is *without* wiſdom, *without* reaſon, if his wiſdom and reaſon *exceed* ours. He has *no reaſon*, nor *wiſdom*, if his reaſon and wiſdom are *infinite*.

Secondly, This argument, if it were allowed, leads directly to *atheiſm*. For if a revelation cannot be divine, if it contains any thing myſterious, whoſe fitneſs and neceſſity cannot be explanied by human reaſon, then neither *creation* nor *providence* can be proved to be divine, for they are both of them more myſterious than the Chriſtian revelation. And revelation itſelf is *therefore* myſterious, becauſe creation and providence cannot be delivered from myſtery. And was it poſſible for man to comprehend the reaſons, on which the *manner* of the creation and divine providence are founded, then revelation might be without myſteries.

But if the myſteries in revelation are owing to that, which is by the nature of things incomprehenſible in creation and providence, then

then it is very unreaſonable to reject revelation, becauſe it has that which it muſt neceſſarily have, not from itſelf, but from the nature and ſtate of things. And much worſe is it, to deny revelation to be divine, for ſuch a reaſon, as makes it equally fit to deny *creation* and *providence* to be of God.

For if every thing is *arbitrary*, whoſe *fitneſs and expedience* human reaſon cannot *prove* and *explain*, then ſurely an *inviſible over-ruling providence*, that orders all things in a manner, and for reaſons known only to itſelf; that ſubjects human life, and human affairs, to what changes it pleaſes; that confounds the beſt laid deſigns, and makes great effects ariſe from folly and imprudence; that gives the race not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong; that brings good men into affliction, and makes the wicked proſperous; ſurely ſuch a providence muſt be highly arbitrary.

And therefore if this argument is to be admitted, it leads directly to *atheiſm*, and brings us under a greater neceſſity of rejecting this notion of divine providence, on the account of its myſteries, than of rejecting a revelation that is myſterious in any of its doctrines. And if, as this writer frequently argues, God cannot be ſaid to deal with us as rational agents, if he requires any thing of us that our reaſon cannot prove to be neceſſary; ſurely he cannot be ſaid to deal with us as rational and moral agents, if he over-rules our perſons and affairs, and diſappoints our counſels, makes

weakneſs proſperous, and wiſdom unſucceſsful, in a *ſecret* and *inviſible* manner, and for reaſons and ends that we have no means of knowing.

And if it may be ſaid, To what purpoſe has he given us reaſon, if that is not ſolely to give laws to us; ſurely it may better be ſaid, To what purpoſe has he given us reaſon to take care of ourſelves, to provide for our happineſs, to prepare *proper* means for certain ends, if there is an over-ruling providence that changes the *natural courſe* of things, that confounds the beſt laid deſigns, and diſappoints the wiſeſt counſels?

There is nothing therefore half ſo myſterious in the Chriſtian revelation, conſidered in itſelf, as there is in that *inviſible* providence, which all muſt hold that believe a God. And though there is enough plain in providence to excite the adoration of humble and pious minds, yet it has often been a rock of *atheiſm* to thoſe, who make their own reaſon the meaſure of wiſdom.

Again: Though the *creation* plainly declares the glory, and wiſdom, and goodneſs of God, yet it has more myſteries in it, more things whoſe fitneſs, expedience, and reaſonableneſs human reaſon cannot comprehend, than are to be found in Scripture.

If therefore he reaſons right, who ſays, *If there may be ſome things in a true Religion, whoſe fitneſs and expedience we cannot ſee, why not others; Nay, why not the whole; ſince that*

*that would make God's laws all of a piece? And if the having of these things is no proof of its falshood, how can any things fit and expedient (which no Religion is without) be a proof of the truth of any one Religion**? If, I say, this is right reasoning, then it may be said, *If there are things in the creation whose fitness we cannot see, why not others; Nay, why not the whole; since that would make all God's works of a piece? And if the being of such things as these in the creation is not a proof of its not being divine, How can the fitness and expedience of any creation prove that it is the work of God?*

Thus does this argument tend wholly to Atheism, and concludes with the same force against *creation* and *providence*, as it does against revelation.

This is farther plain from our author's account of the *works* and *laws* of God. It is a first principle with him, that God's *laws* and *works* must have the same infinite wisdom in them. *That they both alike have the character of infinite wisdom impressed on them, and both alike discover their divine original* †.

But if so, then nothing can prove any *works* to be of divine original, but that which will prove any *laws* to be of divine original. And nothing can shew any *laws* to be unworthy of God, but what would equally shew *any works* to be unworthy of God. But we have already

* *First Address to the Inhabitants of London, page* 57.

† *Page* 124.

ſeen, that no laws can come from God, or be fit for him to make, but ſuch as human reaſon can prove to be fit and expedient; therefore *no works* can proceed from God, or be worthy of him, but ſuch as human reaſon can prove to be fit and expedient.

Either therefore there is nothing in the works of the creation, whoſe fitneſs and expedience cannot be proved; nothing in God's providence over whole nations, and particular perſons, whoſe fitneſs and expedience cannot be explained and juſtified by human reaſon, or elſe neither creation nor providence can be aſcribed to God.

He ſays, *It is impoſſible men ſhould have any juſt idea of the perfections of God, who think that the dictates of infinite Wiſdom do not carry their own evidence with them, or are not by their own innate worth diſcoverable to all mankind**.

But if ſo, then we are obliged, out of regard to the divine perfections, to deny every creature, or part of the creation, to proceed from God, which does not *carry its own evidence of infinite wiſdom, and diſcovers its own innate worth to all mankind.*

Any one muſt eaſily ſee, that I put no force upon this writer's arguments, to give them this atheiſtical tendency, but barely repreſent them as they are in his book.

For ſince it is his own avowed and repeated principle, that God's *works* and *laws* are both of

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of a kind, and that they muſt both *alike diſcover their divine original*; it neceſſarily follows, that if any *law* or *command* muſt be unfit for God to make, becauſe its fitneſs cannot be proved by human reaſon; then every creature, or part of the creation, whoſe fitneſs and expedience cannot be proved by human reaſon, muſt be rejected as unworthy of God. So that this argument leads to Atheiſm, not by any remote conſequence, but by its firſt and immediate tendency.

For according to it, a man is obliged, out of regard to the divine perfections, to deal with *creation* and *providence*, as this writer does with *Scripture*; and to allow no more of either of them, than ſuits with his own notions of that which God ought to do in creation and providence.

The true grounds and reaſons on which we are to believe a revelation to be divine, are ſuch external marks and ſigns of God's action and operation, as are a ſufficient proof of it. And if God has no ways of acting that are peculiar and particular to himſelf, and ſuch as ſufficiently prove his action and operation, then revelation can have no ſufficient proof that it comes from God.

And if a revelation had no other proof of its Divinity, but ſuch an internal excellency and fitneſs of its doctrines as is fully known and approved of by *human reaſon*; ſuch an internal excellency would be ſo far from being a ſufficient proof of its divinity, that it would be

beeaprobable objection againſt it. For it has an appearance of great probability, that God would not make an external revelation of that *only*, which was *ſufficiently* and fully known to the natural man, or mere Reaſon without it.

Although therefore no revelation can come from God, whoſe doctrines have not an *internal excellency*, and the *higheſt fitneſs*; yet the non-appearance of ſuch excellency and fitneſs to *our reaſon*, cannot be a diſproof of its Divinity, becauſe it is our ignorance of ſuch matters without revelation, that is the *true ground and reaſon* of God's revealing any thing to us.

The credibility therefore of any external divine revelation with regard to human reaſon, reſts wholly upon *ſuch external* evidence, as is a ſufficient proof of the divine operation, or interpoſition. If there be no ſuch external evidence poſſible; if God has no ways of acting ſo *peculiar* to himſelf, as to be a *ſufficient* proof to human reaſon of his action; then no revelation can be ſufficiently proved to be a divine external revelation from God.

I appeal therefore to the miracles and prophecies on which Chriſtianity is founded, as a ſufficient proof that it is a divine revelation. And ſhall here conſider what is objected againſt the ſufficiency of this kind of proof.

1. It is objected, That miracles cannot prove a *falſe*, or *bad* doctrine to be *true* and *good*;

good; therefore miracles, *as ſuch*, cannot prove the truth of any revelation.

But though miracles cannot prove falſe to be true, or bad to be good; yet they may prove that we ought to receive ſuch doctrines, both as true and good, which we could not know to be true and good without ſuch miracles. Not becauſe the miracles have any influence upon the things revealed, but becauſe they teſtify the credibility of the revealer, as having God's teſtimony to the truth of that which he reveals.

If therefore miracles can be a ſufficient proof of God's ſending any perſons to ſpeak in his name, and under his authority; then they may be a ſufficient proof of the truth and divinity of a revelation, though they cannot prove that which is falſe to be true.

Our author therefore brings a farther objection againſt this uſe of miracles.

If, ſays he, *evil beings can impreſs notions in mens minds as ſtrongly as good beings, and cauſe miracles to be done in confirmation of them; is there any way to know to which of the two, notions thus impreſſed are owing, but from their nature and tendency, or internal marks of wiſdom and goodneſs?——And if ſo, Can external proofs carry us any farther than the internal proofs do* * *?*

This objection ſuppoſes, that no miracles, as *ſuch*, can be a ſufficient proof of the divinity of a revelation; for this reaſon, becauſe we do not

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not known the extent of that power, which evil ſpirits have of doing miracles. But this objection is groundleſs. For, granting that we do not know the nature and extent of that power which evil ſpirits may have, yet if we know *enough* of it to affirm, that the *creation* is not the work of evil ſpirits; if we can ſecurely appeal to the creation, as *a ſufficient proof* of God's action and operation; then we are fully ſecure in appealing to miracles, as a ſufficient proof of a divine revelation.

For if the creation muſt of neceſſity be allowed to be the work of God, notwithſtanding any *unknown degree* of power in evil ſpirits; if we can as certainly aſcribe it to God, as if we really knew there were no *ſuch* ſpirits; then in ſome caſes miracles may be as full a proof of the operation, or interpoſition of God, as if we really knew there were no ſuch ſpirits in being.

I do not aſk, Whether the *ſame divine* perfection is neceſſary to foretel ſuch things as are foretold in Scripture, and work ſuch miracles as are there related, as is neceſſary to *create?* I do not aſk, Whether any power leſs than divine can do ſuch things? I only aſk, Whether there is any certainty, that the creation is the work of God? Whether we can be ſure of the divine operation, from the exiſtence of that creation that we are acquainted with? Or, Whether we are in any *doubt* or *uncertainty* about it, becauſe we do not know the *true*

nature

nature or *degree* of power that may belong to evil ſpirits ?

For if it can be affirmed with certainty, that the creation is the work of God, notwithſtanding our uncertainty about the degree of power that may belong to evil ſpirits ; then we have the ſame certainty, that the *prophecies* and *miracles* recorded in Scripture, are to be aſcribed to God as his doing, notwithſtanding our uncertainty of the power of evil ſpirits.

And this is affirmed, not becauſe *prophecies* and *miracles* require the *ſame degree* of divine power, as to create (for that would be affirming we know not what) but it is affirmed, becauſe the creation cannot be a *better*, *farther*, or *different* proof of the action or operation of God, than ſuch miracles and prophecies are.

For every reaſon for aſcribing the creation to God, is the ſame reaſon for aſcribing ſuch miracles and prophecies to God ; and every argument againſt the certainty of thoſe miracles and prophecies coming from God, is the ſame argument againſt the certainty of the creations being the work of God ; for there cannot be more or leſs certainty in one caſe than in the other.

For if evil ſpirits have ſo the creation in their hands, that by reaſon of their power over it *no miracles* can prove the operation of God, then the operation of God cannot be proved from the creation itſelf.

For

For the creation cannot be proved to be the operation of God, unleſs it can be proved that God *ſtill preſides* over it.

And if *all that* which is extraordinary and miraculous may be accounted for, without the interpoſition of God; then nothing that is ordinary and common, according to the courſe of nature, can be a proof of the action of God. For there can be no reaſon aſſigned, why that which is *ordinary* ſhould be aſcribed to God, if all that is, or has been, or can be miraculous, may be aſcribed to evil ſpirits.

Either therefore it muſt be ſaid, that there are, or may be miracles, which cannot be the effects of evil ſpirits; or elſe nothing that is ordinary and common can be a proof of the operation of God. For if nothing miraculous can be an undeniable proof of God's action, nothing created can be a proof of it.

The matter therefore ſtands thus: There are, and may be miracles, that cannot be aſcribed to evil ſpirits, without aſcribing the creation to them; and which can no more be doubted to come from God, than we can doubt of his being the Creator of the world. There may be miracles therefore, which, *as ſuch*, and conſidered *in themſelves*, are as full a proof of the *truth* of that which they atteſt, as the creation is of the *fitneſs* of that which is created.

And though the *matter* of a revelation is to be attended to, that we may fully underſtand it, and be rightly affected with it; yet the rea-

ſon

ſon of our receiving it as divine, muſt reſt upon that *external authority* which ſhews it to be of God.

And the authority of miracles, ſufficiently plain and apparent, are of themſelves a full and neceſſary reaſon for receiving a revelation, which both as to its *matter* and *manner* would not be approved by us without them.

It ſeems therefore to be a *needleſs*, and too *great* a conceſſion, which ſome *learned divines* make in this matter, when they grant that we muſt firſt examine the doctrines revealed by miracles, and ſee whether they contain any thing in them *abſurd*, or *unworthy* of God, before we can receive the miracles as divine. For,

1. Where there can be nothing doubted, nor any more required, to make the miracles ſufficiently plain and evident, there can be no doubt about the truth and goodneſs of the doctrine they atteſt. Miracles in ſuch a ſtate as this are the laſt reſort, they determine for themſelves, and cannot be tried by any thing farther

And as the *exiſtence* of things is the higheſt and utmoſt evidence of God's having created them, and not to be tried by our *judgments* about the reaſonableneſs and ends of their creation; ſo a courſe of plain undeniable miracles, atteſting the truth of a revelation, is the *higheſt* and *utmoſt* evidence of its coming from God, and not to be tried by our judgments about

about the *reaſonableneſs* or *neceſſity* of its doctrines.

And this is to be affirmed, not becauſe God is too good to ſuffer us to be brought into ſuch a ſnare, but becauſe we can know nothing of God, if ſuch a courſe of miracles is not a ſufficient proof of his action and interpoſition. For if doctrines revealed by ſuch an *undeniable change* in the natural courſe of things, have not thence a ſufficient proof that they are divine doctrines; then *no laws* that are according to the natural ſtate of things, can have *thence* any proof that they are *divine laws*.

For if *no courſe* of *miracles* can be of *itſelf* a ſufficient proof, that *that* which is atteſted by them is atteſted by God; then no *ſettled ordinary* ſtate of things can of *itſelf* be a proof, that *that* which is required by the natural ſtate of things is required by God.

2. To try miracles, ſufficiently plain and evident, by *our judgments* of the reaſonableneſs of the doctrines revealed by them, ſeems to be beginning at the wrong end. For the doctrines had not been revealed, but becauſe of our ignorance of the *nature* and *reaſonableneſs* of them; nor had the miracles been wrought, but to prevent our *acquieſcing* in our own judgments about the worth and value of them.

To

3. To ſay, That no miracles, however plain and evident, are to be received as divine, if they atteſt any doctrine that appears to *human reaſon* to be abſurd, or unworthy of God, is very unreaſonable. For what is it that can be called *human reaſon* in this reſpect? Is it any thing elſe than human opinion? And is there any thing that mankind are in greater uncertainty, or more contrary to one another, than in their opinions about what is abſurd, or unworthy of God in religion? And is it not the very end and deſign of a divine revelation, to help us to a rule that may put an end to the diviſions of human reaſon, and furniſh us with an authority for believing ſuch things, as we ſhould not think it reaſonable to believe without it?

And how weak and uſeleſs muſt that revelation be, which has not ſufficient authority to teach us *new notions* of religion, and perſuade us to believe that to be reaſonable and worthy of God, which we could not believe to be ſo upon a leſs authority?

But if this be the caſe, as it ſeems clearly to be, then we are not to try plain and evident miracles of the *higheſt kind*, by our judgments of the reaſonableneſs of the doctrines revealed by them; but miracles are to be received, as of ſufficient authority to form and govern our opinions about the reaſonableneſs of the doctrines.

It may perhaps be ſaid, though the authority of miracles is ſufficient to govern our

opinions in doctrines that are only myſterious, and above the comprehenſion of our reaſon, yet that which is plainly and groſly abſurd, or unworthy of God, cannot, nor ought to be received upon any authority of the *greateſt miracles*.

This objection is vain and abſurd; it is vain, becauſe it relates to a caſe that never was the caſe of miracles; and it is abſurd, becauſe it is providing againſt a caſe that never can happen to miracles. For to ſuppoſe any thing in its own nature groſly abſurd, or unworthy of God, to be atteſted with the *higheſt evidence* of miracles, is as impoſſible and contradictory a ſuppoſition, as to ſuppoſe God to create rational beings wicked in their nature, that they might thereby be of ſervice to the devil. Theſe two ſuppoſitions have not the ſmalleſt difference, either in abſurdity or impoſſibility.

Again; The hiſtory of magical wonders, and extraordinary things done by evil ſpirits, is no objection againſt the ſufficiency of that proof that ariſes from miracles. For the queſtion is not, whether nothing that is extraordinary can be done by evil ſpirits in any circumſtances, but whether nothing that is miraculous can, *as ſuch*, be a proof of its being done by God. For theſe two caſes are very conſiſtent. It may be very poſſible for evil ſpirits to do things extraordinary in *ſome circumſtances*, as where people enter into contracts with them, and reſign themſelves up to their power, and yet that miracles may in *other circumſtances*, merely as miracles,

miracles, be a ſufficient proof of their being done by God.

Thus the caſe of the *Egyptian magicians* is ſo far from abating the weight of miracles, that it is a great proof of their authority, conſidered in themſelves; for the *Magicians* could proceed but a little way in their contention with *Moſes*, they were ſoon made to feel his ſuperior power in the ſame manner as the reſt of the *Egyptians* did, and to confeſs that his miracles were done by the *finger of God*. This very inſtance therefore fully ſhews, that miracles, *as ſuch*, may be a ſufficient proof of God's interpoſition. For if, in the caſe of a contention, the ſuperior power muſt be aſcribed to God, then miracles, as *ſuch*, or of *ſuch a kind* as having none equal to them, or able to ſtand againſt them, muſt in ſuch a ſtate be a ſufficient proof of their being done by God, and give a ſufficient warrant to receive any doctrine that is atteſted by them.

For let it be ſuppoſed, that the *Egyptian* Magicians had deſtroyed the power of *Moſes*, and brought all the *miraculous evils* upon the *Iſraelites*, as enemies of the *Egyptian* Gods, which he brought upon them; what conſequence muſt *reaſon* have drawn from ſuch an event? Could reaſon have proved, that the God that made the world was *one* God, and that he alone ought to be worſhipped? Or that the *Egyptians* ought to have left their Gods, who had the *whole creation* in their hands in ſuch a manner, as to change the nature of

things as they pleaſed, and deſtroy every power that oppoſed them?

Now either the caſe here ſuppoſed is poſſible, or it is impoſſible. If it is poſſible, then all the reaſons for worſhipping the *one true God*, taken from the *nature* and *ſtate* of the creation, may entirely ceaſe, and be ſo many reaſons for idolatrous worſhip. For no one can have any reaſons for worſhipping the one true God, from the nature and ſtate of the creation, if other Gods have the greateſt power over it, and can turn every thing into a *plague* upon thoſe that do not worſhip them.

But if this caſe is impoſſible, then it neceſſarily follows, that miracles, *as ſuch*, and conſidered *in themſelves*, may be *certain* and *infallible* proofs of God's interpoſition. For this caſe can only be impoſſible, becauſe the greateſt, plaineſt miracles, cannot poſſibly be on the ſide of error. But if this cannot be, then the greateſt, plaineſt miracles, *as ſuch*, and conſidered *in themſelves*, are an infallible mark of truth.

And he that abides by miracles in ſuch circumſtances, as proofs of the operation of the *one true* God, has the ſame certainty of proceeding right, as he that takes the ſtate and nature of the creation to be the effect of the one true God.

And as miracles, thus conſidered in themſelves, are the higheſt and moſt undeniable evidence of the truth and divinity of any external revelation; ſo Chriſtianity ſtands fully diſtinguiſhed

ſtinguiſhed from all other religions by the higheſt and moſt undeniable evidence; ſince it has all the proof that the *higheſt ſtate* of mircles can give, and every other religion is without any ſupport from them.

And though this writer, with a boldneſs worthy of himſelf, often puts all *traditional religions* upon a level; yet he might have ſhewn himſelf as much a friend to truth and ſobriety, by aſſerting that all *arguments* are equally concluſive, all *tempers* equally virtuous, all *deſigns* equally honeſt, and all *hiſtories* and *fables* equally ſupported by evidence of fact.

But his prodigious raſhneſs in aſſerting, at all adventures, whatever he pleaſes, is not confined to matters of fact, but is as remarkably viſible in that part of his book which pretends to argument; as may be fully ſeen by the following paragraphs.

" It is the obſervation, ſays he, of *natura-*
" *liſts*, that there is no ſpecies of creatures
" but what have ſome *innate weakneſs*, which
" makes them an eaſy prey to other animals
" that know how to make the advantage of
" it. Now the *peculiar foible* of mankind
" is *ſuperſtition*, which at all times has made
" them liable to be practiſed on, not by crea-
" tures of different ſpecies, but by thoſe of
" their own; who by a confident pretence of
" knowing more than their neighbours, have
" firſt circumvented the *many*, the *credulous*
" and *unwary*; and afterwards forced the

" *free-thinking few into an outward compli-*
" *ance**." Here it is to be obierved;

1. That ſuperſtition is the *peculiar foible* in man, as natural and intrinſic to him, as an *innate weakneſs* in animals. He has it therefore from God and nature, in the ſame manner as animals have their innate weakneſs. And therefore it muſt be as unnatural for men to be without ſuperſtition, or not act according to it, as for animals to be without their innate weakneſs.

2. Mankind are, according to this account, in their natural ſtate entirely incapable of knowing any true religion. For if, as our author ſaith, *ſuperſtition be the oppoſite to true religion*; if this ſuperſtition be the *innate peculiar foible* of human nature; if mankind are not only to begin and end their lives among thoſe that have all the *ſame foible*, but what is worſe, have at all times had this innate foible increaſed and practiſed upon by the crafty pretenders of their own ſpecies; are they not inwardly and outwardly fixed in ſuperſtition, the *oppoſite to true religion?*

Judge therefore by this, what our author *really* thinks of the *excellency* and *perfection* of the light of nature; and how much meaning he has in ſuch exclamations as theſe: *And now let any one ſay, how it is poſſible God could more fully*

* *Page* 169.

fully make known his will to all intelligent creatures, than by making every thing within and without them, a declaration of it* ?

That is, How can they have a better *inward guide* to true religion, than by having an *innate* peculiar foible contrary to it ? How can they have a *better outward call* to the true religion, than by having all the world conſpiring to fix them in ſuperſtition ?

For this, he ſays, is their ſtate ; this innate peculiar foible has been at all times increaſed and practiſed upon by the more cunning of their ſpecies, and the *free-thinking few forced into an outward compliance.* It is this inward and outward ſtate of Man, that throws our author into ſo much tranſport at its abſolute perfection, as to matters of religion.

Again ; Judge from this with what piety and ſincerity he ſpeaks of God, when he ſays, *Infinite wiſdom, directed by infinite goodneſs, will certainly give us equal degrees of evidence for religious truths, which ſo much concern us, as it has done for truths of leſs importance* †. For if our Author believed himſelf in this aſſertion, how could he believe ſuperſtition to be the *peculiar* inborn foible of man ? For can religious truths have the *ſame degrees of evidence* with things of leſs importance, if man's *peculiar foible* relates to religion ?

Again ; He cries out, *In what point is it, that men of the meaneſt abilities may not know their duty to God? Cannot they tell what ſenti-*

* *Page* 19. † *Page* 131.

*ments inſpire them with love and reverence for the deity**? Now put theſe things together, and then his argument will proceed thus: If ſuperſtition is *contrary* to true religion, and ſuperſtition be the *innate peculiar* foible of all men, how can the *weakeſt* man be in any miſtake about what is right or wrong in religion? Let the reader here judge whether I put any force upon his words.

Judge again, how ſerious this Author muſt be in a variety of ſuch arguments as theſe: *If*, ſays he, *men have been at all times obliged to avoid ſuperſtition, and embrace true religion, there muſt have been at all times ſufficient marks of diſtinction.* And again: *Nothing*, ſays he, *can be a greater libel on the true religion, than to ſuppoſe it does not contain ſuch internal marks, as will, even to the meaneſt capacity, diſtinguiſh it from all falſe religions* †. But if ſuperſtition is the *innate peculiar* foible of mankind, where muſt a man of the *meaneſt capacity* look for the *internal marks* of true religion? And if all the world is, and always was over-run with ſuperſtition, and the *free-thinking* few have always been forced into an *outward compliance*, where muſt ſuch a man look for the *outward marks* of true religion?

To give you one inſtance more of this writer's extravagant and inconſiſtent notions.

He makes *reaſon*, or *natural religion*, to be God's *internal revelation*, differing *only* from *external revelation in the manner of its being*

* *Page* 280. † *Page* 295.

being communicated. He rejects *external revelation* as unworthy of God, becauſe it has not been ſufficiently made known at *all times*, and in *all places*; yet he ſets up an internal revelation, as worthy of God, which has never been made known to any *one man* of any *time* or *place* in the world. For what one man ever knew that *reaſon* was God's *internal revelation*, to which nothing could be added by any external revelation?

It is a mighty complaint with our author againſt chriſtianity, that ſo much happineſs ſhould be deferred till the time of *Tiberius*, and that it ſhould be communicated to no greater a part of the world than chriſtianity hath been. But is not this a *judicious* complaint in the mouth of a perſon, that is ſetting up a religion that has been communicated to no body but himſelf?

I know nothing that can be ſaid for our author, in excuſe of ſo much confuſion and ſelf-contradiction, unleſs it be the particular hardſhips of his *ſect*. The *free-thinking few*, he ſays, *are forced into an outward compliance*; and that which *forces* a man into a ſtate of hypocriſy, may force him into a great deal of confuſion and ſelf-contradiction.

To return: I have from a conſideration of the ſtate and condition of man, and the ſeveral relations which God ſtands in towards his creatures, ſhewn that it is utterly impoſſible for human reaſon to be a competent judge of the

the fitneſs, or unfitneſs of all that God may or may not require of us. The two following chapters ſhall ſtate the nature and perfection of reaſon, conſidered in itſelf, or as it is a faculty, or principle of action in human nature.

CHAP. IV.

Of the ſtate and nature of reaſon, as it is in man; and how its perfection in matters of religion is to be known.

THIS writer and others, who take to themſelves the names of *free-thinkers*, make their court to the world, by pretending to vindicate the right that all men have to judge and act according to their own reaſon. Though I think the world has no more to thank them for on this account, than if they had pretended to aſſert the right that every man has to ſee only with his *own eyes*, or to hear *only* with his *own ears*.

For their own reaſon always did, does, and ever will govern rational creatures in every thing

thing they determine, either in ſpeculation or practice. It is not a matter of *duty* for men to uſe their own reaſon, but of *neceſſity*; and it is as impoſſible to do otherwiſe, as for a being that cannot act but from choice to act without choice. And if a man was to try not to act according to his own reaſon or choice, he would find himſelf under the ſame difficulty, as he that tries to think without thinking upon ſomething.

And if God was to command us, by freſh revelations every day of our lives not to act from a principle of reaſon and choice, ſuch revelations could have no more effect upon us, than if they came from the weakeſt amongſt mankind. For as our principle of acting is not derived from ourſelves, ſo it is no more in our power to alter it, or contradict it, than it is in the power of matter not to *gravitate*, or to exiſt without taking up ſome *place*.

Man is under the ſame neceſſity of acting from his own choice, that *matter* is of not acting at all; and a being, whoſe principle of action is reaſon and choice, can no more act without it, or contrary to it, than an extended being can be without extenſion.

All men therefore are equally reaſonable in this reſpect, that they are, and muſt be, by a *neceſſity* of nature, equally directed and governed by their own reaſon and choice.

For as the principle of action, in human nature, is *reaſon* and *choice*, and nothing can be done or believed, but for *ſome reaſon*, any

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more than a thing can be choſen and not be choſen; ſo the acting according to one's own reaſon is not the privilege of the *philoſopher*, but eſſential to human nature; and as inſeparable from all perſons, as ſelf-conſciouſneſs, or a ſenſe of their own exiſtence.

The diſpute therefore betwixt chriſtians and *unbelievers* concerning reaſon, is not, whether men are to uſe their *own reaſon*, any more than whether they are to ſee with their *own eyes*; but whether every man's reaſon muſt needs guide him by its *own light*, or muſt ceaſe to guide him as ſoon as it guides him by a light borrowed from revelation? This is the true ſtate of the queſtion, not whether reaſon is to be followed, but when it is *beſt* followed? not whether it is to be our guide, but how it may be made our *ſafeſt guide?*

The *free-thinkers* therefore rather appeal to the paſſions than reaſon of the people, when they repreſent the clergy and chriſtianity as enemies to reaſon and juſt thinking, and themſelves as friends and advocates for the uſe of reaſon.

For chriſtians oppoſe unbelievers, not becauſe they *reaſon*, but becauſe they reaſon *ill*. They receive revelation, not to ſuppreſs the natural power, but to give new and heavenly light to their reaſon; not to take away their right of judging for themſelves, but to ſecure them from falſe judgments.

If therefore a poor peaſant ſhould call upon our free-thinkers to lay aſide their *bigotry* to *ideas*,

ideas, *arguments*, and *philoſophy*, and govern themſelves by reaſon; it would be no more abſurd, than for them to exhort chriſtians to lay aſide their bigotry to *creeds* and *doctrines* of revelation, and to govern themſelves by reaſon.

For it may as well be affirmed, that a man departs from the uſe of his reaſon, becauſe he depends upon *ideas*, *arguments*, and *ſyllogiſms*; as that he departs from the uſe of his reaſon, becauſe he proceeds upon *prophecies*, *miracles*, and *revelations*.

And if he uſes his reaſon weakly, and is ſubject to deluſion in theſe points, he no more renounces his reaſon, or goes over to another direction, than *Hobbes*, *Spinoſa*, *Bayle*, *Collins*, or *Toland* renounce their reaſon, when they take their own *fancies* to be demonſtrations.

Chriſtians therefore do not differ from unbelievers in the *conſtant uſe* of their reaſon, but in the *manner* of uſing it: As *virtuous* men differ from *rakes*, not in their deſire of happineſs, but in their manner of ſeeking it.

And though this writer is very free in his charge of *bigotry* upon chriſtians, yet I may venture to challenge him to ſhew, that there can poſſibly be more *bigotry* on the ſide of religion, than there may be againſt it. For as *bigotry* is nothing but weak reaſoning, ſo *infidels* are entitled to as large a ſhare of it as believers, and to ſuppoſe that bigotry may be charged upon thoſe who have a zeal *for* chriſtianity, but cannot be charged on them that

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are zealous *againſt* it, is as juſt a way of proceeding, as to ſay of two *brothers*, that one is to be charged with *paſſion*, becauſe he *loves* his father, but the other cannot be charged with paſſion, becauſe he *hates* his father.

And as men that write againſt religion are as much concerned to have it falſe, as thoſe who write for it are to have it true; ſo all that there is to blind and prejudice the latter, has the ſame power to blind and prejudice the former.

It appears from what has been ſaid, that every man's own reaſon is his only principle of action, and that he muſt judge according to it, whether he receives, or rejects revelation.

Now although every man is to judge according to the light of his own reaſon, yet his reaſon has very little light that can be called *its own*. For as we derive our nature from our parents, ſo that which we generally call *natural knowledge*, or the light of *nature*, is a knowledge and light that is made natural to us by the *ſame authority*, which makes a certain *language*, certain *cuſtoms*, and *modes* of behaviour natural to us.

Nothing ſeems to be our own, but a *bare capacity* to be inſtructed, a nature *fitted* for any impreſſions; as capable of vice as virtue; as ready to be made a vicious animal, as a religious rational creature; as liable to be made a *Hottentot*, by being born among Hottentots,

as

as to be a *Chriſtian*, by being born among Chriſtians.

It is not my intention by this to ſignify, that there is not a *good* and *evil*, *right* and *wrong* founded in the nature of things; or that morality has any dependence upon the *opinions* or *cuſtoms* of men; but only to ſhew, that we *find* out this right and wrong, come to a *ſenſe* of this good and evil, not by any inward ſtrength, or light that our *natural reaſon* of itſelf affords, but by ſuch *external means*, as people are taught *articulate* language, *civility*, *politeneſs*, or any other *rules* of civil life.

Men do not prefer virtue to vice from a philoſophical contemplation of the fitneſs of the one, and the unfitneſs of the other, founded in the nature of things; but becauſe it is a judgment as *early* in their minds, as their knowledge of the words, virtue and vice.

And it can no more be reaſonably affirmed, that our knowledge of God and divine things, our opinions in morality, of the excellency of this or that virtue, of the immortality of our ſouls, of a future life of rewards and puniſhments, are the effects of our natural light; than it can be reaſonably affirmed, that our living in *ſociety*, our *articulate* language, and *erect poſture* are owing to the light of nature.

For as all mankind find themſelves in this ſtate before any reaſoning about it; as *education* and *human authority* have ſet our bodies *upright*

upright, taught us *language*, and accuſtomed us to the *rules* and *manners* of a ſocial life; ſo *education* and the *ſame human* authority have impreſſed and planted in our minds certain notions of God and divine things, and formed us to a ſenſe of good and evil, a belief of our ſoul's immortality, and the expectation of another life.

And mankind are no more left to find out a God, or the fitneſs of moral virtue, by their own reaſon, than they are left by their own reaſon to find out who are their parents, or to find out the fitneſs of ſpeaking an articulate language, or the reaſonableneſs of living in ſociety.

On the contrary; we know that our manner of coming into the world ſubjects us, without any choice, to the *language*, *ſentiments*, *opinions*, and *manners* of thoſe amongſt whom we are born. And although when we come to any ſtrength, or art of reaſoning, or have a *genius* for philoſophic enquiries, we may thence deduce proofs of the *Being* and *Attributes* of God, the *reaſonableneſs* of religion and morality, the *nature* of our ſouls, and the *certainty* of a future ſtate, and find that the opinions and tradition of mankind concerning theſe things are well founded; yet theſe are an *after-knowledge*, not common to men, but accidental confirmations of that knowledge and belief of a God, religion, and morality, which were before fixed in us, more or leſs, by education, and the authority of thoſe amongſt whom we have lived.

And

And as no *Philoſopher* ever proved the *fitneſs* of human nature for a *ſocial* life from principles of reaſon and ſpeculation, who had not *firſt* been taught the nature and advantage of Society *another way*; ſo no one ever pretended to prove the Being and Attributes of God, or the excellency of moral virtue, who had not *firſt* been taught the knowledge of God and moral virtue ſome *other way*.

Now if this is the ſtate of reaſon as it is in man; if this is all the light that we have from our *own nature*, a *bare capacity* of receiving good or bad impreſſions, right or wrong opinions and ſentiments, according to the ſtate of the world that we fall into; then we are but poorly furniſhed to aſſert and maintain the *abſolute perfection* of our own reaſon.

If our light is little more than the opinions and cuſtoms of thoſe amongſt whom we live, and it be ſo hard for a man to arrive at a greater wiſdom, than the common wiſdom of the *place* or *country* which gave him birth and education; how unreaſonably do we appeal to the perfection and ſufficiency of our own reaſon, againſt the *neceſſity* and *advantage* of divine revelation?

If we are *nothing* without the aſſiſtance of men; if we are a kind of fooliſh, helpleſs animals, till education and experience have *revealed* to us the wiſdom and knowledge of our fellow-creatures; ſhall we think ourſelves too wiſe and full of our own light, to be farther

enlightened with a knowledge and wiſdom revealed to us by God himſelf?

This gentleman ſpeaking of education ſaith, *Education is juſtly eſteemed a ſecond nature; and its force is ſo ſtrong, that few can wholly ſhake off its prejudices, even in things unreaſonable and unnatural; and muſt it not have the greateſt efficacy in things agreeable to reaſon, and ſuitable to nature* *?

All that I ſhall add to this account, is only this, That we are, by the circumſtances and condition of human life, *neceſſarily* ſubjected to this *ſecond nature*, and cannot avoid coming under its power.

But here let me aſk this pleader for the ſufficiency of the light of nature, how thoſe that reſign themſelves up to the light of their *own nature*, ſhall know, whether it is their *firſt*, or their *ſecond* nature that directs them?

Here are, it ſeems, *two natures*; they may be as different as good and evil; yet as they are both *natures*, both *internal light*, how ſhall a man know which he follows? He does not know which was firſt, or why he ſhould call one firſt, and the other ſecond; they are both internal, and without any thing to diſtinguiſh them. And as he is not to *reſiſt* the motions of nature, or *ſtifle* its directions, ſo he muſt be as *obedient* to the directions of the *ſecond* as of the firſt nature, becauſe he does not perceive their difference, nor has any means to diſtinguiſh their operations.

He

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He therefore that aſſerts the light of nature to be a *ſufficient unerring* guide in divine matters, ought either to ſhew that our *ſecond* nature is as *ſafe* a guide as the firſt; or that though it is nature, yet it has no *natural power* over us.

For ſince every man is *neceſſitated* to take upon him a *ſecond* nature, which he does not *know* to be a ſecond, or *when* it began, or *how far* it has proceeded, or how *contrary* it is to his firſt nature; he that would prove the light of nature to be ſo perfect, that nothing can be added to it, is obliged to prove, that our ſecond nature, which we receive by education, has the *ſame degree* of perfection. For ſo far as our ſecond nature is *different* from the firſt, ſo far it has *changed* the firſt; and if we are to follow nature excluſive of revelation, we may take *revenge*, *ſelf-murder*, *incontinence*, *ſenſuality*, *pride*, *haughtineſs*, *ſelf-conceit*, and a *contempt* of all things *ſacred*, to be the true dictates and directions of nature.

For as it may be very eaſy, and I am afraid often happens to people, to be thus educated; ſo if education is a *ſecond nature*, and nature is to be eſteemed a *true* and *perfect* guide, a man thus educated has all his vices made ſo many glorious laws of nature; and through the ſtrength of his natural light, he condemns humility, ſelf-denial, and devotion, as fooliſh bigotry.

This writer ſays, *Natural religion*, that is the religion of nature, *is a perpetual ſtanding*

*rule for men of the meaneſt, as well as the higheſt capacities, and carries its own evidence with it, thoſe internal, inſeparable marks of truth**. But if education is a *ſecond nature*, and, as this writer affirms, *has the force of a ſecond nature even in things unreaſonable and unnatural*; then this ſecond nature has not only its natural religion, which is alſo a *perpetual ſtanding rule for men of the meaneſt, as well as the higheſt capacities, which carries its own evidence with it, thoſe internal, inſeparable marks of truth*; but it may alſo have a natural religion, both *unreaſonable and unnatural*; ſince it is here affirmed, that education has the force of nature even in things of this kind.

Again; If education has this force of nature even in things unreaſonable and unnatural, and ſtill greater force in things agreeable to nature if it is alſo abſolutely neceſſary for all men to come under the power of *ſome ſecond* nature; what can be more vain or groundleſs, than to pretend to *ſtate* the *light*, or *rectitude* of human nature, ſince it muſt be for the moſt part in every man, as the *uncertainty*, *variety*, *happineſs*, or *unhappineſs* of education has rendered it?

And our author can no more tell what man would be without human education, or what nature would do for thoſe who had no foreign inſtruction, than he can tell what ſort of beings dwell in the *moon*. And yet he that does

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does not know this, how can he know what the light of nature is in itſelf?

For if moſt of our judgments, opinions, tempers, and ways of thinking, are owing to education, and the authority of that part of the world where we dwell, if theſe impreſſions have the power of a *ſecond nature* upon us; then the light of *nature* can no more be diſtinguiſhed from the light of *education*, than the ſtrength which we have from *nature*, can be diſtinguiſhed from the ſtrength which we have from our *food*.

So that to declare the light of nature ſo abſolutely perfect, as to be incapable of all improvement even by divine revelation, is no leſs an extravagance, than to declare the education of mankind to be abſolutely perfect in the *ſame degree*.

For if nature not only *wants*, but cannot poſſibly *avoid* education; if this *neceſſary unavoidable* education becomes *another nature*, undiſcernible from the firſt; then nothing can poſſibly be affirmed of the perfection of the light of nature, but what muſt be affirmed in the *ſame degree* of the perfection of education. And he that affirms that mankind have had, at *all times*, and in *all places* of the world, the *ſame ſufficient perfect* light of nature, muſt affirm that mankind have had, at all times and in all places of the world, the ſame *perfect unerring* education.

When therefore it is juſt and fitting for all people to abide by the *abſolute perfection* of

their *education*, the *infallible* light of their *ſecond nature*, as the unerring ſtandard, meaſure, and rule of all that is to be eſteemed *moral*, *religious*, and *divine*; then it may be juſt to appeal to the *natural light* of all men, of all ages, and all places, as a *ſufficient teacher* of all that ought, or ought not to be a matter of religion.

For till it can be ſhewn, that men are not liable to a *ſecond nature* from education, or that there is, or can be any nature without it; the *ſtate* of nature muſt *differ* all over the world, and in every age of the world, juſt as the light and advantage of education have *differed* in the ſeveral parts, and ages of the world.

In a word, the religious and moral light of our *firſt nature* is juſt as great as the *firſt ſtrength* of infants; and the religious and moral light of our *ſecond nature* is juſt as perfect as our *education*, and as much of our own growth, as the firſt language that we are taught to ſpeak.

May not therefore one juſtly wonder, what it is that could lead any people into an imagination of the abſolute perfection of *human reaſon?* There ſeems no more in the ſtate of mankind to betray a man into this fancy, than to perſuade him that the reaſon of *infants* is abſolutely perfect. For ſenſe and experience are as full and ſtrong a proof againſt one, as againſt the other.

But

But it must be said for these writers, that they decline all arguments from facts and experience, to give a better account of human nature; but with the same justice, as if a man was to lay aside the authority of *history*, to give you a truer account of the life of *Alexander*.

They argue about the perfection of human reason, not as if it were something *already* in being, that had its *nature* and *condition*, and shewed itself to be what it is; but as if it were something that might take its state and condition according to their fancies and speculations about it.

Their objection against revelation is founded upon the pretended *sufficiency*, and *absolute perfection* of the light and strength of human reason, to teach all men all that is wise, and holy, and divine in religion. But how do they prove this perfection of human reason? Do they appeal to mankind as proofs of this perfection? Do they produce any body of men, in this, or any other age of the world, that without any assistance from revelation have attained to this perfection of religious knowledge? This is not so much as pretended to: The history of such men is entirely wanting. And yet the want of such a fact as this has even the force of demonstration against this pretended sufficiency of natural reason.

Because it is a matter not capable of any other kind of proof, but must be admitted as certainly true, or rejected as certainly false, ac-

cording as fact and experience bear witneſs for, or againſt it.

For an enquiry about the light, and ſtrength, and ſufficiency of reaſon, to guide and preſerve men in the knowledge and practice of true religion, is a queſtion as *ſolely* to be reſolved by *fact and experience*, as if the enquiry was about the *ſhape* of man's body, or the *number* of his ſenſes. And to talk of a light and ſtrength of reaſon natural to man, which fact and experience have never yet proved, is as egregious nonſenſe, as to talk of natural ſenſes, or faculties of his body, which fact and experience have never yet diſcovered.

For as the *exiſtence* of man cannot be proved but from fact and experience; ſo every *quality* of man, whether of body or mind, and every degree of that quality, can only be proved by fact and experience.

The degrees of human *ſtrength*, the nature of human *paſſions*, the duration of human *life*, the light and ſtrength of human *reaſon* in matters of religion, are things not poſſible to be known in any *other degree*, than *ſo far* as fact and experience prove them.

From the bare conſideration of a rational ſoul in union with a body, and bodily paſſions, we can neither prove man to be *ſtrong* or *weak*, *good* or *bad*, *ſickly* or *ſound*, *mortal* or *immortal:* all theſe qualities muſt diſcover themſelves, as the *eye* diſcovers its degree of *ſight*, the *hand* its degree of *ſtrength*, &c.

To

To enquire therefore, whether men have by nature light and ſtrength ſufficient to guide, and keep them in the true religion; is the ſame appeal to fact and experience, as to enquire whether men are *mortal*, *ſickly*, or *ſound*; or how far they can *ſee* and *hear*. For nothing that relates to human nature, as a quality of it, can poſſibly have any other proof.

As therefore theſe gentlemen are, in this debate, without any proof, or even pretence of proof from fact and experience, ſo their cauſe ought to be looked upon to be as vain and romantic, as if they had aſſerted that men have ſenſes naturally fitted to hear ſounds, and ſee objects at all diſtances, though fact and experience, the only means of knowing it if it was ſo, has from the creation to this time proved the quite contrary.

For he that aſſerts the ſufficiency of the light and ſtrength of reaſon to guide men in matters of religion, is not only without any poſitive proof from fact or experience on his ſide, but has the hiſtory of all ages, for near ſix thouſand years paſt, fully demonſtrating the quite contrary.

If ſome other enquirers into human nature ſhould affirm, that there is in mankind a *natural inſtinct* of mutual love, *ſufficient* to make every man, at all times, love every other man with the *ſame degree* of affection as he loves himſelf; I ſuppoſe ſuch an opinion would be thought too abſurd and extravagant to need any confutation. And yet all the abſurdity of it

it would lie in this, that it affirmed ſomething of the *ſufficiency* of a natural quality in man, which could not be ſupported by a ſingle inſtance of any one man, and was contrary to the experience and hiſtory of every age of the world.

Now this is exactly the caſe of theſe gentlemen; their opinion has neither more nor leſs abſurdity in it. They only affirm ſuch a ſufficiency of light and reaſon to be natural to all men, as cannot be ſupported by a ſingle inſtance of any one man that ever lived, and is fully contradicted by the experience and hiſtory of every age ſince the creation of the world.

By what has been here ſaid, I hope the reader will obſerve that this enquiry about the perfection or imperfection, the ſtrength or weakneſs of reaſon in man, as to matters of religion, reſts *wholly* upon fact and experience; and that therefore all ſpeculative reaſonings upon it are to be looked upon as idle and viſionary, as a ſick man's dreams about health, and as wholly to be rejected, as any ſpeculative arguments that ſhould pretend to prove, in ſpite of all facts and experience, the *immortality*, and *unalterable* ſtate of human bodies.

Our author himſelf ſeems very ſenſible, that the argument drawn from facts and experience preſſed hard upon his cauſe; and therefore has given the beſt anſwer to it he can yet think of.

It cannot, ſays he, *be imputed to any defect in the light of nature, that the* Pagan *world ran*

ran into idolatry; but to their being entirely governed by prieſts, who pretended communication with their Gods, and to have thence their revelations, which they impoſed on the credulous as divine oracles.

The truth and juſtneſs of this aſſertion will fully appear by the following illuſtration.

" It cannot be imputed to any defect in " the health and ſoundneſs of man's natural " conſtitution, that the world has, in all ages, " been over-run with diſeaſes and diſtempers; " but to their being entirely governed by " phyſicians, who pretended to I know not " what ſecret knowledge of medicines, " which they impoſed on the ſickly as infal- " lible remedies."

For as a perfect ſtate of health, conſcious to itſelf of a ſufficiency of natural ſtrength to keep clear of all diſeaſes, ſeems to be out of all danger from phyſicians; ſo had mankind been ever conſcious to themſelves of a ſufficient natural knowledge of what is true or falſe in religion, or, as this author ſaith, ſuch as *enabled men of the meaneſt capacity to diſtinguiſh between religion and ſuperſtition* *, what *room* had there been for frauds and impoſtures in religion?

If a man, whoſe buſineſs it was to provide himſelf with a quantity of *pure gold*, ſhould be continually buying *lead*, and *braſs*, and *iron*, inſtead of it; would you ſay that his falling into ſuch miſtakes, was not to be imputed

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puted to any *defect* in his knowledge of *pure gold*, or how to diſtinguiſh it from other metals, but to the *lies* and *affirmations* of thoſe who told him, that ſuch lead, and braſs, and iron were pure gold?

Farther; This author ſaith, the world did not run into idolatry through any defect in the light of nature, but becauſe they were *credulous*.

Now credulity, *ſo far* as it goes in any matter, ſuppoſes an *equal degree* of ignorance in that matter, whatever it is. No man is credulous of falſe accounts, or fabulous relations, where he knows the truth.

Children are exceeding *credulous*, becauſe they are exceeding *ignorant*; and in the ſame degree as their knowledge increaſes, their credulity abates. So that to ſay men ran into idolatry, not through want of light, or ignorance of what is true and falſe in religion, but becauſe they were *credulous*, is as nice a diſtinction, as if it ſhould be ſaid, that children believe any fable that you can tell them, not becauſe they are *ignorant* of what is true or falſe, but becauſe they are *credulous*.

Or as it may be ſaid, in another matter, with the ſame juſtneſs of thought, that ſuch an *army* ran away from the enemy, not thro' any defect in *natural courage*, but becauſe they were *affrighted*.

For men may as juſtly be ſaid to have a perfect courage, and yet be governed by their fears, as to have a perfect knowledge of that which

which is true in religion, and yet be credulous of that which is falſe.

This *Anti-paſtor* in his *ſecond Addreſs* ſays, *Can the ſuperſtition of the* Pagans *be imputed to any defect, or inſufficiency in the light of reaſon, when it was wholly owing to their abandoning that divine light, and in defiance of it running into ſenſeleſs traditions* * *?*

But how came it that they ran into ſenſeleſs traditions? What was it that admitted theſe traditions as juſt and good? Why it was that faculty which judges of every thing, and which this writer recommends as an unerring guide. And to ſay a man's ſuperſtition is not owing to any defect or weakneſs of his reaſon, but to his admitting ſenſeleſs traditions, is as vain an obſervation, as to ſay a man's falſe reaſoning is not owing to any weakneſs of his reaſon, but to his admitting and proceeding upon fooliſh and abſurd arguments.

For fooliſh and abſurd arguments do not more ſhew the ſtate of his reaſon, who proceeds upon them, than ſenſeleſs traditions ſhew the ſtate of his reaſon, who admits them: For they are as much the objects of his reaſon as arguments; and all that is ſenſeleſs and abſurd in either of them, muſt either be charged equally upon the reaſon of him that admits them, or both equally removed from it. So that if ſenſeleſs traditions are not a proof of the weakneſs of their reaſon that approve of them, neither

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neither are fooliſh and abſurd arguments a proof of the weakneſs of their reaſon who proceed upon them.

Again; Suppoſing, as he ſaith, that the *Pagans, in defiance of their reaſon,* received ſuch traditions; does this do any credit to the light of reaſon? For how can a man renounce his reaſon, but by an act of his reaſon?

But is it not as great a reproach to reaſon, to renounce itſelf, as to credit a falſe tradition? For a *reaſon* that can, *knowingly,* lay aſide itſelf, is in a more defective and diſordered ſtate, than a reaſon that is only capable of being deluded. But if reaſon, in this caſe, lays aſide itſelf *without* knowing it, then, I ſuppoſe, ſuch an *accident* may be fairly attributed to ſome weakneſs and defect of reaſon.

He proceeds thus: *It is certainly no good argument againſt the ſufficiency of the divine light of nature, that men could not err, except they left it, and followed vain traditions* *.

This obſervation has juſt the ſame ſenſe and acuteneſs in it, as if it had been ſaid, *It is certainly no good argument againſt* the ſufficiency of the divine healthfulneſs of *human nature, that men could not be* ſickly, *except they left it,* and *fell into various diſtempers; or againſt the* ſufficiency of the divine ſtrength of *natural courage, that men could not* be timorous, *till they* [illegible] it, and followed *vain fears.* For to prove that reaſon is ſufficient, becauſe every thing that is abſurd is contrary to reaſon, is like

* *Second* Addreſs, *page* 39.

like proving our healthfulneſs to be ſufficient, becauſe all diſtempers are contrary to it; or our courage to be ſufficient, becauſe fears and cowardice are contrary to it.

Beſides, how is it that men *leave* their reaſon? Why, juſt as *ignorant* men leave their *knowledge*; as *dull* people leave their *wit*, or *cowards* leave their *courage*. The firſt part of this paragraph tells you of a *ſufficiency of the divine light of nature:* Well; what has this divine light of nature done? What ſufficient effects has it had? Why, it has covered all the world with darkneſs. For as a proof of the ſufficiency of this divine light, he adds, in the very next words, *Whoever conſiders how all mankind, even the wiſeſt nations, have been impoſed on by ſenſeleſs tales, and idle ſtories, conſecrated by length of time*; well, what then? what ſhould he conclude from this conſideration? Ought he not to conclude, that the *reaſon* of the wiſeſt men of all nations runs very low in matters of religion? This is the only concluſion that common ſenſe can draw from ſuch an obſervation: But, our author ſays, *Whoever conſiders this, will not be very fond of relying upon tradition in matters of religion.*

As if he had ſaid, Whoever conſiders how all mankind, even the wiſeſt of men have been impoſed upon by abſurd arguments, will not be very fond of relying upon arguments. For idle tales, and ſenſeleſs traditions in matters of religion, impoſe upon men, in no other manner, than falſe arguments, and abſurd concluſions

ſions impoſe upon them. And as it is their own reaſon that gives the ſtrength and appearance of truth to a ſenſeleſs argument; ſo it is their own reaſon that gives the credibility, and appearance of truth to ſenſeleſs traditions.

And to lay the fault upon tradition, and not upon reaſon that approves it, is as juſt, as to lay the fault upon an abominable argument, and not upon reaſon that proceeds upon it.

Again: Suppoſing that *all mankind, even the wiſeſt nations,* have for this ſix thouſand years been thus impoſed upon, not knowing how to diſtinguiſh idle tales and ſenſeleſs traditions from true religion; is not this a noble foundation for this writer to build the *ſufficiency of the divine light of nature upon?* For ſuppoſing it had been in the greateſt degree *inſufficient*, what other effect could have followed from it, but only this, that *all mankind* even the *wiſeſt nations,* ſhould have been overrun with error? And is it not ſtrange, that effects ſhould bear no proportion to their cauſes; that the ſame things ſhould follow from the *ſufficiency* of the divine light of nature, which muſt have followed from its *greateſt imperfection* and *inſufficiency?*

And muſt not the enemies of *reaſon* and *free-thinking* be forced to confeſs, that this writer hath choſen an excellent guide for himſelf, ſince he ſo fully acknowledges, that no one yet has been rightly guided by it? Muſt not

not his preſent undertaking be granted to be the effect of cool and ſober deliberation, ſince it only calls people of *all*, even the *meaneſt capacities*, to ſuch an uſe of their reaſon, as the wiſeſt of men and nations have always been ſtrangers to?

Again; It is pretended, that the abſurdities of the Pagan world are not owing to any defect of reaſon, but to their *undue uſe* of reaſon. The Biſhop of *London* very juſtly obſerves that ſuch a pretence is *begging the queſtion*. Our author thinks not. I will therefore grant, that it was through an *undue uſe* of their reaſon. For granting that mankind fell into all thoſe abſurdities by an undue uſe of their reaſon, the charge againſt reaſon is rather increaſed than abated. For an undue uſe of it is as great an accuſation of reaſon, as any *weakneſs* or *blindneſs* that can be attributed to it. For to diſtinguiſh betwixt the defect of reaſon, and the undue uſe of reaſon, is as ſolid as to diſtinguiſh betwixt the perfection of reaſon, and a due uſe of reaſon. For is not a due uſe of reaſon, ſo far as it proceeds, a certain ſign of its perfection? Muſt not therefore the *undue* uſe of reaſon, ſo far as it proceeds, be an equally certain ſign of its imperfection?

For what can make an undue uſe of reaſon but itſelf? And if reaſon is ſo univerſally liable to an *undue uſe* of itſelf, that the univerſal ignorance and corruption of mankind is to be aſcribed to it, then this undue uſe of reaſon is as great a ſign of its univerſal weakneſs and imperfection, as any thing elſe can be.

This *undue uſe* of reaſon is either voluntary and known, or involuntary and unknown. If it is the latter, then it reſolves itſelf into that natural weakneſs and infirmity, which his Lordſhip has ſo fully proved to belong to human reaſon. If it is the former, then it may juſtly be reckoned a *greater diſorder*, and ſuch as makes reaſon more unfit to be a guide, than all the weakneſs, blindneſs, and corruption, which his Lordſhip hath accuſed it of.

CHAP. V.

Shewing, that all the mutability *of our tempers, the* diſorders *of our paſſions, the* corruption *of our hearts, all the* reveries *of the imagination, all the* contradictions *and* abſurdities *that are to be found in human life, and human opinions, are ſtrictly and preciſely the mutability, diſorders, corruption, and abſurdities of* human reaſon.

IT is the intent of this chapter to ſhew, that although common language aſcribes a variety of faculties and principles to the ſoul, imputing this action to the blindneſs of our *paſſions,*

ſions, that to the inconſtancy of our *tempers*; one thing to the heat of our *imagination*, another to the coolneſs of our *reaſon*; yet in ſtrictneſs of truth, every thing that is done by us is the action and operation of our reaſon, and is to be aſcribed to it, as the ſole faculty or principle from whence it proceeded, and by which it is governed and effected.

This writer takes a great deal of pains to prove, by *long quotations*, what no body denies, that there is a *law* or *light* of reaſon common to men. All this is as freely granted, as that *love* and *hatred*, *feeling* and *ſenſation* are common to men; and is granting no more, than that men are by nature intelligent and rational beings: For the faculties of man, as he is an intelligent being, as neceſſarily perceive ſome difference in actions, as to *good* and *bad*, as they perceive ſome things they like, and ſome things they diſlike. In this ſenſe there is a law or light of reaſon common to all men: And the law of reaſon is in men, as the law of *thinking*, of *liking*, and *diſliking* is in men.

And the different degrees of reaſon are in men, as the different degrees of love and averſion, as the different degrees of wit, parts, good nature, or ill nature are in man.

And as all men have naturally more or leſs of theſe qualities, ſo all men have naturally more or leſs of reaſon: And the bulk of mankind are as different in reaſon, as they are in theſe qualities.

As love is the ſame paſſion in all men, yet is infinitely different; as hatred is the ſame paſ-

ſion in all men, yet with infinite differences; ſo reaſon is the ſame faculty in all men, yet with infinite differences.

And as our paſſions not only make us different from other men, but frequently and almoſt daily different from ourſelves, loving and hating under great inconſtancy; ſo our reaſon is not only different from the reaſon of other men, but is often different from itſelf, by a ſtrange inconſtancy, ſetting up firſt one opinion and then another.

So that when we talk of *human reaſon*, or a reaſon *common* to mankind, we talk of as *various*, *uncertain*, and *unmeaſurable* a thing, as when we talk of a *love*, a *liking*, an *averſion*, a *good nature*, or *ill nature* common to mankind; for theſe qualities admit of no variation, uncertainty, or mutability, but ſuch as they directly receive from the *reaſon* of mankind.

For it is as much the *reaſon* of man that acts in all theſe tempers and makes them to be juſt what they are, as it is the reaſon of man that demonſtrates a mathematical propoſition.

Was our reaſon ſteady, and of one kind, there would be juſt the ſame ſteadineſs and regularity in our tempers; did not reaſon fall into miſtakes, follies and abſurdities, we ſhould have nothing fooliſh or abſurd in our love or averſion. For every humour, every kind of love or averſion, is as ſtrictly the *action* or *operation* of our reaſon, as judgment is the act of our reaſon.

And the tempers and paſſions of a child differ only from the tempers and paſſions of a man,

man, exactly in the ſame degree, as the reaſon of a child differs from the reaſon of man.

So that our paſſions and tempers are the natural actions and real effects of our reaſon, and have no qualities, either good or bad, but ſuch as are to be imputed to it.

A laudable good nature, or a laudable averſion, is only reaſon acting in a *certain manner*; a criminal good nature, or a criminal averſion, is nothing elſe but an ill-judging reaſon; that is, reaſon acting in another certain manner.

But ſtill it is reaſon, or our underſtanding that is the *only agent* in our bad paſſions, as well as good paſſions; and as much the *ſole agent* in all our paſſions and tempers, as in things of mere ſpeculation.

So that the ſtate of reaſon in human life is nothing elſe but the ſtate of human tempers and paſſions: And right reaſon in morality is nothing elſe but right love, and right averſion.

And all our tempers and ways of liking and diſliking are as much the acts and operations of our reaſon, as the wiſeſt actions of our life; and they only differ from reaſon, as reaſon differs from itſelf, when it judges rightly, and when it judges erroneouſly.

All *that* therefore which we commonly call the weakneſs, blindneſs, and diſorder of our *paſſions* is in reality the weakneſs, blindneſs, and diſorder of our *reaſon*. For a right love, or wrong love, denotes only reaſon acting in a *certain particular* manner.

So that if any thing can be ſaid preciſely, or with exactneſs, of love, averſion, good na-

ture, or ill nature, as common to mankind, the ſame may be ſaid of reaſon, as common to mankind.

And if it would be very fooliſh and abſurd to aſcribe an abſolute perfection to human love making it alone a ſufficient guide to all good, or an abſolute perfection to human hatred, as a ſufficient preſervative from all vice; it is equally abſurd to aſcribe the ſame perfection to human reaſon, becauſe neither love nor hatred have any thing perfect or imperfect, good or bad in them, but what is ſolely the action and operation of reaſon.

For the diſtinction of our reaſon from our paſſions is only a diſtinction in language, made at pleaſure; and is no more real in the things themſelves, than the *deſire* and *inclination* are really different from the *will*. All therefore that is weak and fooliſh in our paſſions is the weakneſs and folly of our reaſon; all the inconſtancy and caprice of our humours and tempers is the caprice and inconſtancy of our reaſon.

It is not *flattery* that compliments vice in authority; it is not *corruption* that makes men proſtitute their honour; it is not *ſenſuality* that plunges men into *debauchery*; it is not *avarice* that makes men ſordid; it is not *ambition* that makes them reſtleſs; it is not *bribery* that makes men ſell their conſciences; it is not *intereſt* that makes them lye, and cheat, and perjure themſelves. What is it therefore? Why, it is that *abſolute perfect* faculty, which our author ſets up as the *unerring* ſtandard of all that is *wiſe*, *holy*, and *good*; it is in his ſtrong language, *reaſon*, the *uſe of reaſon*, *human reaſon* that does all this.

For whether any thing be fit to be done, it is, as he ſays, *reaſon alone which muſt judge; as the eye is the ſole judge of what is viſible, the ear of what is audible, ſo reaſon of what is reaſonable.*

Every thing therefore that is done, every thing that is choſen or preferred in human life before any thing elſe, is as ſtrictly done or choſen by reaſon, as every thing that is ſeen, is ſeen by the eye; and every thing that is heard, is heard by the ear.

To ſuppoſe that reaſon permits itſelf to be governed by paſſions or tempers, but is not the *immediate full agent* of all that is done by them, is as abſurd, as to ſuppoſe that reaſon permits itſelf to be governed by the *hand* when it is writing falſly, or the *tongue* when it is talking profanely, but is not the immediate direct agent of all that is written and ſpoken by them.

Brutes are incapable of imprudence and immorality, becauſe none of their actions are the actions of *reaſon:* Every thing therefore that is imprudence, immorality, baſeneſs, or villany in us, muſt be the act of our reaſon; otherwiſe it could no more be imprudent or immoral than the actions of brutes.

If therefore, as this author often ſaith, reaſon be the only faculty that diſtinguiſheth us from brutes; it neceſſarily follows, that thoſe irregularities, whether of humour, paſſions, or tempers, which cannot be imputed to brutes, muſt be ſolely attributed to that faculty by which we are diſtinguiſhed from brutes; and

conſequently, every thing that is fooliſh, vain, ſhameful, falſe, treacherous, and baſe, muſt be the ſole expreſs acts of our reaſon; ſince if they were the acts of any thing elſe, they could have no more vanity, falſeneſs, or baſeneſs, than hunger and thirſt.

As therefore all that is faithful, juſt, and wiſe, can only be attributed to that which is done by our reaſon; ſo by plain conſequence, all that is vain, falſe, or ſhameful, can only be imputed to any acts, as they are the acts of reaſon.

It is not my intent in the leaſt to cenſure, or condemn our common language, which conſiders and talks of reaſon and the paſſions as if they were as different as a *governor* and his *ſubjects*.

Theſe forms of ſpeech are very intelligible and uſeful, and give great life and ornament to all diſcourſes upon morality; and are even neceſſary for the Hiſtorian, the Poet, and the Orator.

But when certain perſons aſcribe to human reaſon, as a *diſtinct faculty* of human nature, I know not what *abſolute perfection*, making it as immutable, and incapable of any addition or improvement, as God himſelf; it is neceſſary to conſider human reaſon and human nature, not as it is repreſented in common language, but as it is in reality in itſelf.

Notwithſtanding therefore in common language, our paſſions and the effects of them are very uſefully diſtinguiſhed from our reaſon, I have here ventured to ſhew, that all the diſ-

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orders of human nature are preciſely the diſorders of human reaſon, and that all the perfection or imperfection of our paſſions is nothing elſe but the perfection or imperfection of our reaſon.

And we may as well think, that judgment, prudence, diſcretion, are things different from our reaſon, as that humour, temper, approbation, or averſion, are really different from our reaſon.

For as it is a right exerciſe of reaſon, that denominates its actions to be *prudence*, *judgment*, and *diſcretion*; ſo it is a wrong exerciſe of reaſon that denominates its actions to be *humour*, *temper*, and *caprice*.

And it would be as abſurd to condemn humour and caprice, if they were not the actions and operations of reaſon, as to commend a prudence and diſcretion that were the effects of an irrational principle.

Our follies therefore and abſurdities of every kind are as neceſſarily to be aſcribed to our reaſon, as the *firſt*, *immediate*, and *ſole* cauſe of them, as our wiſdom and diſcretion are to be aſcribed to it in that degree.

The difference between reaſon aſſenting to the properties of a *ſquare*, and reaſon acting in motions of deſire or averſion, is only this, that in the latter caſe, it is reaſon acting under a ſenſe of its own *good* or *evil*; in the former caſe, it is reaſon acting under a ſenſe of *magnitude*.

And as the relations of magnitude, as they are the objects of our reaſon, are only the objects

jects of its *aſſent* or *diſſent* ; ſo good and evil, as they are objects of our reaſon, are only the objects of its *deſire* or *averſion :* And as the aſſent or diſſent, in matters of ſpeculation, whether right or wrong, is ſolely the act of our reaſon ; ſo deſire or averſion, in human life, whether right or wrong, is equally the act of our reaſon.

All the good therefore, that there is in any of the deſires or averſions of mere natural man, is the good of our reaſon ; and all the evil or blindneſs that there is in any of our paſſions, is ſolely the evil and blindneſs of our reaſon.

Becauſe love, deſire, averſion, conſidered as operations proceeding from mere nature alone denote nothing elſe but our reaſon acting in a certain manner ; juſt as prudence, diſcretion, and judgment when conſidered as our own abilities, or ſtrength, denote nothing elſe but our reaſon acting in a certain manner.

We often ſay, that our paſſions deceive us or perſuade us ; but this is no more ſtrictly ſo, than when we ſay, our *intereſt* deceived, or a *bribe* blinded us. For bribes and intereſt are not active principles, nor have any power of deception; it is only our reaſon that gives them a falſe value, and prefers them to a greater good.

It is juſt ſo in what we call the deceit of our paſſions : They meddle with us no more than bribes meddle with us; but that pleaſurable perception, which is to be found in certain enjoyments, is by our reaſon prefer-

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red to that better good, which we might expect from a self-denial.

We say again, that our passions paint things in false colours, and present to our minds vain appearances of happiness.

But this is no more strictly true, than when we say, our *imagination* forms castles in the air. For the imagination signifies no distinct faculty from our reason, but only reason acting upon our *own ideas*.

So when our passions are said to give false colours to things, or present vain appearances of happiness, it is only our reason acting upon its own ideas of *good* and *evil*, just as it acts upon its own ideas of *architecture*, in forming castles in the air.

So that all *that* which we call different faculties of the soul, tempers and passions of the heart, strictly speaking means nothing else, but the various acts and operations of one and the same rational principle, which has different names, according to the objects that it acts upon, and the manner of its acting.

In some things it is called speculative, in others it is called practical reason. And we may as justly think our speculative reason is a different faculty from our practical reason, as that our tempers, aversions, or likings, are not as fully and solely to be ascribed to our reason, as syllogysms and demonstrations.

It was as truly reason that made *Medea* kill her children, that made *Cato* kill himself, that made Pagans offer human sacrifices to idols; that made *Epicurus* deny a providence, *Ma-*

homet

homet pretend a revelation; that made ſome men ſceptics, others bigots; ſome enthuſiaſts, others profane; that made *Hobbes* aſſert all religion to be human invention, and *Spinoſa* to declare trees, and ſtones, and animals, to be parts of God; that makes free-thinkers deny freedom of will, and fataliſts exhort to a reformation of manners; that made *Vaux* a conſpirator, and *Ludlow* a regicide; that made *Muggleton* a fanatic, and *Rocheſter* a libertine: It was as truly human reaſon that did all theſe things, as it is human reaſon that demonſtrates mathematical propoſitions.

Medea and *Cato* acted as truly according to the judgment of their reaſon at that time, as the *confeſſor* that chuſes rather to ſuffer than deny his faith.

And the difference between them does not conſiſt in this, that one power or faculty of the mind acted in one of them, and another faculty or power of the mind acted in another; that is, that reaſon acted in one of them, and paſſion in another; but purely in the different ſtate of their reaſon. For had not *Medea* and *Cato* thought it beſt to do what they did, at the time they did it, they would no more have done it, than the *confeſſor* would chuſe to ſuffer rather than deny his faith, unleſs he had judged it beſt ſo to do.

It may indeed be well enough ſaid in common language, that paſſion made *Medea* and *Cato* to do as they did, juſt as it may be ſaid of a man that affirms a *plenum*, or holds any ſpeculative abſurdity, that it is blindneſs, or prejudice

judice, that keeps him in it. Not as if blindneſs and prejudice were powers or faculties of his mind, but as they ſignify the *ill ſtate* of his reaſon. Juſt ſo the paſſions may be ſaid to govern men in their actions, not as if they were powers of the mind, but as they denote the diſordered ſtate of reaſon. And whenever any thing is imputed to the ſtrength and violence of our paſſions, ſtrictly ſpeaking, it only means the weakneſs and low condition of our reaſon at that time.

For reaſon governs us as fully, when our actions and tempers are ever ſo bad, as it does when our actions and tempers are ſound and good. And the only difference is, that reaſon acting well governs in the one caſe, and reaſon acting ill governs in the other.

Juſt as it is the ſame reaſon that ſometimes judges ſtrictly right, which at other times judges exceeding wrong, in matters of ſpeculation.

When therefore we ſay, that reaſon governs the paſſions, it means no more, in ſtrict truth, than that reaſon governs itſelf; that it acts with deliberation and attention, does not yield to its firſt judgments or opinions, but uſes ſecond, and third thoughts.

So that guarding againſt the paſſions is only guarding againſt its own firſt judgments and opinions, that is, guarding againſt itſelf.

To all this it may, perhaps, be objected, that our paſſions and tempers ariſe from bodily motions, and depend very much upon the ſtate of our blood and animal ſpirits, and that therefore

fore what we do under their commotions cannot be attributed to our reaſon.

It is readily granted, that the body has this ſhare in our paſſions and tempers: But then the ſame thing muſt be granted of the body in all the acts and operations of the mind. So that if our deſires and averſions cannot be imputed to our reaſon, as it acts, becauſe of the joint operation of the animal ſpirits in them; no more can ſyllogiſms and demonſtrations be attributed to our reaſon, as its operations, becauſe the operation of bodily ſpirits concurreth in the forming of them.

For the moſt abſtract thought, and calm ſpeculation of the mind, has as truly the *concurrence*, and *conjunct* operation of bodily ſpirits, as our ſtrongeſt deſires or averſions. And it is as much owing to the ſtate of the body, that ſuch ſpeculations are what they are, as it is owing to the ſtate of the body, that ſuch paſſions are what they are.

For the motions of the bodily ſpirits are inſeparable from, and according to the ſtate and action of the mind: When reaſon is in ſpeculation of a trifle, they concur but *weakly*; when reaſon ſpeculates intenſely, their operation is *increaſed*. And ſometimes the attention of the mind is ſo great, and has ſo engaged and called in all the animal ſpirits to its aſſiſtance, that the operations of our ſenſes are ſuſpended, and we neither ſee, nor feel, till the attention of the mind has let the ſpirits return to all the parts of the body.

Now

Now will any one ſay, that theſe intenſe thoughts are leſs the acts of the mind, becauſe they have a greater concurrence of bodily ſpirits, than when it is acting with indifference, and ſo has a leſſer quantity of bodily ſpirits?

Yet this might as well be ſaid, as to ſay, that the aſſent or diſſent, in ſpeculation, is the act of our reaſon; but liking or diſliking, loving or hating, are not ſo the acts of our reaſon, becauſe they have a greater concurrence, and different motions of bodily ſpirits.

For, as the mind is in a different ſtate when it deſires good, or fears evil, from what it is when it only compares two triangles; ſo the motions or concurrence of the bodily ſpirits have only *ſuch* a difference, as is ſtrictly *correſpondent* to theſe two ſtates of the mind. They act and join as much in comparing the triangles, as in the deſire of good, or fear of evil. And the mind is juſt ſo much governed by the body, in its paſſions, as it is governed by it in its calmeſt contemplations.

For as the gentle quiet operation of the animal ſpirits is then ſtrictly correſpondent, and entirely owing to the ſtate and action of the mind; ſo in all our paſſions, the ſtrong and increaſed motion of the animal ſpirits is then ſtrictly correſpondent, and entirely owing to the ſtate and action of the mind.

So that reaſon is neither more nor leſs the agent in all our tempers and paſſions, than it is in our moſt dry and ſedate ſpeculations.

It may, and often does happen, that a man may have as great an eagerneſs and impatience in

in the ſolving a mathematical problem, as another hath to obtain any great good, or avoid any great evil.

But may it therefore be ſaid, that it is not reaſon that ſolves, or deſires to ſolve the problem, becauſe the bodily ſpirits are ſo active in it?

In a word; if our paſſions and tempers might not be imputed to our reaſon, as its own genuine acts and operations, becauſe they have ſuch a concurrence of bodily ſpirits, neither could arguing, or reaſoning be attributed to our *reaſon*, as its proper act and operation, becauſe in all argumentation the bodily ſpirits are neceſſarily employed; and the better and cloſer the reaſoning is, the more they are excited and employed.

If it ſhould farther be objected, that reaſon is only *right reaſon*, and therefore cannot be ſaid to act or operate, but where, and ſo far as right reaſon acts.

This is as abſurd as to ſay, that *love* ſignifies only *pure love*, and *hatred* juſt hatred; and that therefore a man cannot be ſaid to love or hate, but when, and ſo far as his love is pure, and his hatred juſt.

To draw now ſome plain conſequences from the foregoing account.

Firſt: If reaſon be, as above repreſented, the *univerſal agent* in the natural man; if all the difference among *ſuch* men, either in ſpeculation or practice, is only ſuch a difference as reaſon makes, then nothing can be more extravagant, than to affirm any thing concerning the

the degree of perfection or imperfection of reaſon as *common* to man. It is as wild and romantic as to pretend to ſtate the meaſure of folly and wiſdom, of fear and courage, of pride and humility, of good humour and ill humour *common* to mankind: For as theſe ſtates of the mind are only ſo many different ſtates of reaſon; ſo no uncertainty belongs to them, but what, in the *ſame degree*, belongs to *reaſon*.

Secondly: Granting that all matters of religion muſt be agreeable to *right*, *unprejudiced* reaſon; yet this could be no ground for receiving nothing in religion, but what *human* reaſon could prove to be neceſſary; for *human* reaſon is no more *right unprejudiced* reaſon, than a ſinner is *ſinleſs*, or a man an *angel*.

Granting again, that a man may go a great way towards rectifying his reaſon, and laying aſide its prejudices; yet no particular man can be a *better judge* of the rectitude of his *own reaſon*, than he is of the rectitude of his own *ſelf-love*, the ſagacity of his own *underſtanding*, the brightneſs of his own *parts*, the juſtneſs of his own *eloquence*, and the depth of his own *judgment*.

For there is nothing to deceive him in *ſelf-love*, in the opinion of his *own merit*, *wit*, *judgment*, and *eloquence*, but what has the ſame power to deceive him in the opinion of his own reaſon. And if, as our author ſays, *it be the fate of moſt ſects to be fondeſt of their ugliеſt brats* *, none ſeem ſo inevitably expoſed to

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this *fatality*, as thoſe whoſe religion is to have no *form*, but ſuch as it receives from their own hearts.

Thirdly: A man that has his religion to chuſe, and with this previous privilege, that he need not allow any thing to be matter of religion, but what his own right reaſon can prove to be ſo, is in as fair a way to be governed by his *paſſions*, as he that has his *condition* of life to chuſe, with the liberty of taking that which his own right reaſon directs him to.

Does any one ſuppoſe now, that nothing but *right reaſon* would direct him in the choice of his condition? Or that he would make the better choice, becauſe he proceeded upon this maxim, that nothing could be right, but that which was agreeable to his *own reaſon*? Or that his tempers, his prejudices, his ſelf-love, his paſſions, his partiality, would have no influence upon his choice, becauſe he had reſigned himſelf up to his *own right reaſon*?

For as our choice of a condition of life is not a matter of ſpeculation, but of good and evil, ſo however it is recommended to our reaſon, it chiefly excites our paſſions. And our choice will be juſt as reaſonable, as our tempers and paſſions are. And he that is made the moſt poſitive of the ſufficiency of his own right reaſon, will be the moſt likely to be governed by the blindneſs of his own paſſions.

Now it is juſt the ſame in the choice of a religion, as in the choice of a condition of life: As it is not a matter of ſpeculation, but of *good* and *evil*, ſo if it is left to be ſtated and determined

determined by our *own reaſon*, it rather appeals to our *tempers*, than employs our reaſon; and to reſign ourſelves up to our own reaſon to tell us what ought, or ought not to be a matter of religion, is only reſigning ourſelves up to our tempers to take what we *like*, and refuſe what we *diſlike* in religion.

For it is not only natural and eaſy for him, who believes that nothing can be a part of religion but what his reaſon can prove neceſſary to be ſo, to take that to be *fully proved*, which is only *mightily liked*, and all that to be entirely contrary to *reaſon*, which is only vaſtly contrary to his *tempers*; this, I ſay, is not only natural and eaſy to happen, but ſcarce poſſible to be avoided.

In a word: When *ſelf-love* is a proper arbitrator betwixt a man and his adverſary; when *revenge* is a juſt judge of meekneſs; when *pride* is a true lover of humility; when *falſehood* is a teacher of truth; when *luſt* is a faſt friend of chaſtity; when the *fleſh* leads to the ſpirit; when *ſenſuality* delights in ſelf-denial; when *partiality* is a promoter of equity; when the *palate* can taſte the difference between ſin and holineſs; when the *hand* can feel the truth of a propoſition; then may *human reaſon* be a proper arbitrator between God and man, the ſole, final, juſt judge of all that ought, or ought not to be matter of a *holy divine* and *heavenly* religion.

Laſtly: If this be the ſtate of reaſon, as has been fully proved, then to pretend that our reaſon is too perfect to be governed by any thing

thing but its own light, is the ſame extravagance, as to pretend that our love is *too pure* to be governed by any thing but its own inclinations, our hatred *too juſt* to be governed by any thing but its own motions. For if all that is baſe and criminal in love, all that is unjuſt and wicked in hatred, is ſtrictly and ſolely to be imputed to our reaſon ; then no perfection can be aſcribed to our reaſon, but ſuch as is to be aſcribed to our love and hatred.

FINIS.

THE ABSOLUTE UNLAWFULNESS OF THE STAGE ENTERTAINMENT FULLY DEMONSTRATED.

By WILLIAM LAW, M. A.

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THE

Abſolute Unlawfulneſs

OF THE

STAGE ENTERTAINMENT.

I Am ſenſible that the Title of this little Book will, to the Generality of People, ſeem too high a Flight; that it will be looked upon as the Effect of a fanatical Spirit, carrying Matters higher than the Sobriety of Religion requires. I have only one Thing to aſk of ſuch People, that they will ſuſpend their Judgment for a while, and be content to read ſo ſmall a Treatiſe as this is, before they paſs any Judgment, either upon the Merits of the Subject, or the Temper of the Writer.

Had a Perſon, ſome Years ago, in the Time of *Popery*, wrote againſt the *Worſhip* of *Images*, as a Worſhip abſolutely unlawful, our Anceſtors would have looked upon him as a Man of a very *irregular* Spirit. Now it is poſſible for the preſent Age to be as much miſtaken in their *Pleaſures*, as the former were in their *Devotions*, and that the allowed Diverſions of theſe Times, may be as great a Contradiction to the moſt eſſential Doctrines of Chriſtianity, as the *Superſtitions* and *Corruptions* of the former Ages. All therefore that I deſire, is only a little *Free-thinking* upon this Subject; and that People will not as blindly reject all Reaſon, when it examines their Pleaſures, as ſome blindly reject all Reaſon, when it examines the Nature of their Devotions.

It is poſſible that *ſomething* that is called a *Diverſion*, may be as contrary to the whole Nature of Religion, as any invented Superſtition, and perhaps more dangerous

to thoſe that comply with it. As the Worſhip of *Images* was a great Sin, though under a Pretence of Piety, ſo the Entertainment of the *Stage* may be very ſinful, though it is only intended as a Diverſion.

For if the Worſhip of Images did not ceaſe to be ſinful, though it was intended for pious Purpoſes, it muſt be great Weakneſs to imagine, that the Entertainment of the *Stage* cannot be any great Sin, becauſe it is only uſed as a Diverſion.

Yet this is a Way of reaſoning that a great many People fall into: They ſay, Diverſions are lawful; that the *Stage* is only a Diverſion; that People go to it without meaning any Harm, and therefore there can be no Sin in it.

But if theſe People were to hear a Man ſay, that Religion is lawful; that the Worſhip of Images was an Act of Religion; that he uſed Images as a Means of religious Devotion, and therefore there could be no Sin in it; they would mightily lament the Bigotry and Blindneſs of his Mind. Yet ſurely this is as wiſe and reaſonable, as for a Perſon to ſay, I go to a Play only as to a Diverſion; I mean no Harm, and therefore there can be no Sin in it. For if Practices may be exceeding ſinful, though they are intended for pious Ends, certainly Practices may be very abominable, though they are only uſed as Diverſions.

When therefore we condemn the *Blindneſs* of ſome Chriſtian Countries, for conforming to ſuch groſs Corruptions of Religion, we ſhould do well to remember, that they have thus much to be pleaded in their Excuſe, that what they do is under a Notion of Piety; that it is in Obedience to the Authority both of Church and State, and that they are at the ſame time kept entire Strangers to the Scriptures. But how juſtly may the ſame Blindneſs be charged upon us, if it ſhould appear, that without having any of their Excuſes, our Public Stated Diverſions are as contrary to Scripture, and the fundamental Doctrines of Religion, as any of the groſſeſt Inſtances of Superſtition? If we hold it lawful to go to wicked ſinful Diverſions, we are as great Strangers to True Religion as they who are pleaſed with buying *Indulgences* and worſhipping Pieces of holy Wood. For

For a *Sinful Diverſion* is the ſame Abſurdity in Religion, as a *Corrupt Worſhip*, and it ſhews the ſame Blindneſs of Mind, and Corruption of Heart, whether we ſin againſt God in the *Church*, or in our *Cloſets*, or in the *Play-Houſe*. If there is any thing contrary to Religion in any of theſe places, it brings us under the ſame Guilt. There may perhaps be this difference, that God may be leſs diſpleaſed with ſuch Corruptions as we comply with through a blind Devotion, than with ſuch as we indulge ourſelves in through a Wantonneſs of Mind, and a Fondneſs for Diverſions.

The Matter therefore ſtands thus: If it ſhould appear that the Stage Entertainment is entirely ſinful; that it is contrary to more Doctrines of Scripture than the Worſhip of *Images*; then it follows, that all who defend it, and take their Share of it, are in the ſame State as they who worſhip *Images*, and defend Drunkenneſs and Intemperance. For to defend or ſupport any ſinful Diverſion, is the ſame Thing as ſupporting or defending any other ſinful Practice. It therefore as much concerns us to know whether our Diverſions are reaſonable, and conformable to Religion, as to know whether our Religion be reaſonable and conformable to Truth. For if we allow ourſelves in Diverſions that are contrary to Religion, we are in no better a State than thoſe whoſe Religion is contrary to Truth.

I have mentioned the Worſhip of *Images*, becauſe it is ſo great a Corruption in Religion, ſo contrary to Scripture, and ſo juſtly abhorred by all the Reformed Churches; that the Reader may hence learn what he is to think of himſelf, if the Stage is ever his Diverſion: For I am fully perſuaded, that he will here find Arguments againſt the *Stage*, as ſtrong and plain as any that can be urged againſt the Worſhip of *Images*, or any other Corruption of the moſt corrupt Religion.

Let it therefore be obſerved, that the Stage is not here condemned, as ſome other Diverſions, becauſe they are dangerous, and likely to be Occaſions of Sin; but that it is condemned, as Drunkenneſs and Lewdneſs, as Lying and Profaneneſs are to be condemned, not as Things

that may only be the Occaſion of Sin, but ſuch as are in their own Nature groſly ſinful.

You go to hear a *Play:* I tell you that you go to hear *Ribaldry* and *Profaneneſs*; that you entertain your Mind with extravagant *Thoughts*, wild *Rants*, *blaſphemous Speeches*, *wanton Amours*, *profane Jeſts*, and *impure Paſſions*. If you aſk me, Where is the Sin of all this? You may as well aſk me, Where is the Sin of *Swearing* and *Lying?* For it is not only a Sin againſt this or that particular Text of Scripture, but it is a Sin againſt the *whole Nature* and Spirit of our Religion.

It is a Contradiction to all Chriſtian Holineſs, and to all the Methods of arriving at it. For can any one think that he has a true Chriſtian Spirit, that his Heart is changed as it ought to be, that he is born again of God, whilſt he is diverting himſelf with the Lewdneſs, Impudence, Profaneneſs, and impure Diſcourſes of the Stage? Can he think that he is endeavouring to be holy as Chriſt is holy, to live by his Wiſdom, and be full of his Spirit, ſo long as he allows himſelf in ſuch an Entertainment? For there is nothing in the Nature of Chriſtian Holineſs, but what is all contrary to the whole Spirit and Temper of this Entertainment. That Diſpoſition of Heart which is to take pleaſure in the various Repreſentations of the *Stage*, is as directly contrary to that Diſpoſition of Heart which Chriſtianity requires, as Revenge is contrary to Meekneſs, or Malice to Good-will. Now that which is thus contrary to the whole Nature and Spirit of Religion, is certainly much more condemned, than that which is only contrary to ſome particular Part of it.

But this is plainly the Caſe of the *Stage:* It is an Entertainment that conſiſts of lewd, impudent, profane Diſcourſes, and as ſuch, is contrary to the *whole Nature* of our Religion. For all the Parts of Religion, or its whole Nature has only this one Deſign, to give us Purity of Heart, to change the Temper and Taſte of our Souls, and fill us with ſuch holy Tempers, as may make us fit to live with God in the Society of pure and glorious Spirits.

An Entertainment therefore which applies to the Corruption of our Nature, which awakens our diſordered Paſſions,

Paſſions, and teaches to reliſh Lewdneſs, immoral Rant and Profaneneſs, is exceeding ſinful, not only as it is a Breach of ſome particular Duty, but as it contradicts the *whole Nature*, and oppoſes *every Part* of our Religion.

For this Diverſion, which conſiſts of ſuch Diſcourſes as theſe, injures us in a very different manner from other ſins. For as Diſcourſes are an Application to our whole Soul, as they entertain the Heart, and awaken and employ all our Paſſions, ſo they more fatally undo all that Religion has done, than ſeveral other Sins. For as Religion conſiſts in a right Turn of Mind; as it is a State of the Heart; ſo whatever ſupports a quite contrary Turn of Mind and State of the Heart, has all the Contrariety to Religion that it can poſſibly have.

St. *John* ſays, *Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* There is no other certain Sign of our belonging to Chriſt; every other Sign may deceive us: all the external Parts of Religion may be in vain; it is only the State of our Mind and Spirit that is a certain Proof that we are in a true State of Chriſtianity. And the Reaſon is plain, becauſe Religion has no other End than to alter our Spirit, and give us new Diſpoſitions of Heart, ſuitable to its Purity and Holineſs. That therefore which immediately applies to our Spirit, which ſupports a wrong Turn of Mind, which betrays our Hearts into impure Delights, deſtroys all our Religion, becauſe it deſtroys that Turn of Mind and Spirit, which is the ſole End and Deſign of all our Religion.

When therefore you are aſked, Why is it unlawful to ſwear? You can anſwer, Becauſe it is contrary to the Third Commandment. But if you are aſked, Why is it unlawful to uſe the Entertainment of the Stage? You can carry your anſwer farther, Becauſe it is an Entertainment that is contrary to all the Parts, the whole Nature of Religion, and contradicts every holy Temper which the Spirit of Chriſtianity requires. So that if you live in the uſe of this Diverſion, you have no Grounds to hope that you have the Spirit and Heart of a Chriſtian.

Thus ſtands the firſt Argument againſt the *Stage:* It has all the Weight in it, that the whole Weight of Religion can give to any Argument.

If you are only for the *Form* of Religion, you may take the Diverſion of the Stage along with it. But if you deſire the *Spirit* of Religion, if you deſire to be truly religious in Heart and Mind, it is as neceſſary to renounce and abhor the Stage, as to ſeek to God, and pray for the Guidance of his holy Spirit.

Secondly. Let the next Argument againſt the Stage be taken from its manifeſt contrariety to this important Paſſage of Scripture: *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good, to the Uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter Grace to the Hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed to the Day of Redemption.*

Here we ſee, that all corrupt and unedifying Communication is abſolutely ſinful, and forbidden in Scripture, for this Reaſon, becauſe it *grieves the Holy Spirit*, and ſeparates *Him* from us. But if it be thus unlawful to have any corrupt Communication of our own, can we think it lawful to go to Places ſet apart for that Purpoſe; to give our Money, and hire Perſons to corrupt our Hearts with ill Diſcourſes, and inflame all the diſorderly Paſſions of our Nature? We have the Authority of Scripture to affirm, that *evil Communication corrupts good Manners*, and that *unedifying Diſcourſes grieve the Holy Spirit.*

Now the *Third* Commandment is not more plain and expreſs againſt *Swearing*, than this Doctrine is plain and poſitive againſt going to the *Play-Houſe.* If you ſhould ſee a Perſon that acknowledges the *Third* Commandment to be a divine Prohibition againſt Swearing, yet going to a *Houſe*, and giving his *Money* to Perſons who were there met to *Curſe* and *Swear* in fine Language, and invent *Muſical Oaths and Imprecations*, would you not think him mad in the higheſt Degree? Now conſider whether there be a leſs Degree of Madneſs in going to the Play-Houſe. You own that God has called you to great Purity of Converſation; that you are forbid all *fooliſh Diſcourſe*, and *filthy Jeſtings*, as expreſsly as you are forbid *Swearing*; and that you are told to *let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but ſuch as is good, for the Uſe of edifying:* And yet you go to a *Houſe ſet apart* for corrupt Communication: You hire Perſons

to

to entertain you with all manner of *Ribaldry*, *Profaneneſs*, *Rant*, and *Impurity* of Diſcourſe, who are to preſent you with *vile* Thoughts, lewd Imaginations, in *fine Language*, and to make *wicked*, *vain*, *and impure Diſcourſe* more lively and affecting, than you could poſſibly have it in any ill Company. Now is not this Sinning with as high a Hand, and as groſsly offending againſt plain Doctrines of Scripture, as if you were to give your *Money* to be entertained with *Muſical Oaths* and *Curſes?*

You might reaſonably think that *Woman* very ridiculous in her *Piety*, that durſt not ſwear herſelf, but ſhould nevertheleſs frequent *Places* to hear *Oaths*. But you may as juſtly think her very ridiculous in her *Modeſty*, who though ſhe dares not to ſay, or look, or do an immodeſt Thing herſelf, ſhould yet give her *Money* to ſee *Women* forget the *Modeſty* of their Sex and *talk impudently* in a Public *Play-Houſe*. If the *Play-Houſe* was filled with *Rakes* and *ill Women*, there would be nothing to be wondered at in ſuch an Aſſembly: For *ſuch Perſons* to be delighted with ſuch Entertainments, is as natural, as for any *Animal* to delight in its proper *Element*. But for Perſons who profeſs Purity and Holineſs, who would not be ſuſpected of *immodeſt* or *corrupt Communications*, for them to come under the Roof of a *Houſe devoted* to ſuch ill Purpoſes, and to be pleaſed Spectators of ſuch Actions and Diſcourſes, as are the Pleaſures of the moſt abandoned Perſons; for them to give their Money to be thus entertained, is ſuch a Contradiction to all Piety and Common Senſe, as cannot be ſufficiently expoſed.

Conſider now, if you pleaſe, the Worſhip of *Images*. You wonder that any People can be ſo blind, ſo regardleſs of Scripture, as to comply with ſuch a Devotion. It is indeed wonderful. But is it not as wonderful, that you ſhould ſeek and delight in an Entertainment made up of Lewdneſs, Profaneneſs, and all the extravagant Rant of diſordered Paſſions, when the Scripture poſitively charges you to forbear all *corrupt Communication*, as that which *grieves the Holy Spirit*, and ſeparates him from us? Is not this being *blind* and *regardleſs* of Scripture in as high a degree? For how can the Scripture ſpeak higher, or plainer, or enforce its Doctrines with a more dreadful Penalty,

Penalty, than that which is here declared? For without the Holy Spirit of God, we are but Figures of Chriſtians, and muſt die in our Sins.

If it was ſaid in Scripture, Forbear from all Image-Worſhip, becauſe it *grieves and removes the Holy Spirit* from you, perhaps you would think the Worſhippers of *Images* under greater Blindneſs, and Corruption of Heart, than they now are. But obſerve, that if you go to the *Stage*, you offend againſt Scripture in as high a degree as they, who ſhould worſhip Images, though the Scriptures forbid it as *grievous to the Holy Spirit*.

If therefore I was to reſt here, I might fairly ſay, that I had proved the Stage to be as contrary to Scripture, as the Worſhip of *Images* is contrary to the Second Commandment. You think it a ſtrange Contrariety, to ſee People on their Knees before an *Image* at a Time that the Heart and Mind ſhould raiſe itſelf to God. But then, is it not as ſtrange a Contrariety, that a Perſon ſhould indulge himſelf in the lewd profane Diſcourſes of the *Stage*, who ſhould have his Heart and Mind preſerved in the Wiſdom, the Purity, and Spirit of Religion? For an Image is not ſo contrary to God, as Plays are contrary to the Wiſdom, the Purity, and the Spirit of Scripture. An Image is only contrary to God, as it has no Power or Perfection: but *Plays* are contrary to Scripture, as the Devil is contrary to God, as they are full of another Spirit and Temper. He therefore that indulges himſelf in the wicked Temper of the *Stage*, ſins againſt as plain Scripture, and offends againſt more Doctrines of it than he that uſes *Images* in his Devotions.

I proceed now to a Third Argument againſt the Stage.

When you ſee the *Players* acting with Life and Spirit, Men and Women *equally bold* in all Inſtances of *Profaneneſs*, *Paſſion*, and *Immodeſty*, I dare ſay you never ſuſpect any of them to be Perſons of *Chriſtian Piety*. You cannot even in your Imagination, join Piety to ſuch Manners, and ſuch a Way of Life. Your Mind will no more allow you to join Piety with the Behaviour of the *Stage*, than it will allow you to think *two* and *two* to be *ten*. And perhaps you had rather ſee your Son chained to a *Galley*, or your Daughter driving a *Plough*, than getting their

their Bread on the *Stage*, by adminiſtring in ſo ſcandalous a manner to the Vices and corrupt Pleaſures of the World. Let this therefore be another Argument to prove the *Abſolute Unlawfulneſs* of going to a *Play*. For conſider with yourſelf, Is the Buſineſs of *Players* ſo contrary to Piety, ſo inconſiſtent with the Spirit and Temper of a true Chriſtian, that it is next to a Contradiction to ſuppoſe them united, how then can you take yourſelf to be *innocent*, who *delight* in their Sins, and *hire* them to commit them?

You may make yourſelf a Partaker of other Men's Sins, by Negligence, and for want of reproving them: But certainly, if you ſtand by, and aſſiſt Men in their evil Actions, if you make their Vices your Pleaſures and Entertainment, and pay your Money to be ſo entertained, you make yourſelf a Partaker of their Sins in a very high degree; and conſequently it muſt be as unlawful to go to a *Play*, as it is unlawful to approve, encourage, aſſiſt, and reward a Man for *Renouncing* a Chriſtian Life.

Let therefore all *Men* and *Women* that go to a *Play*, aſk themſelves this Queſtion; Whether it ſuits with their Religion to act the *Parts* that are there acted? Perhaps they would think this as inconſiſtent with that degree of Piety they profeſs, as to do the vileſt Things. But let them conſider, that it muſt be a wicked and unlawful Pleaſure to delight in any thing, that they dare not to do themſelves. Let them alſo conſider, that they are really *acting* thoſe *Indecencies* and *Impieties* themſelves, which they think is the particular Guilt of the *Players*. For a Perſon may very juſtly be ſaid to do that *himſelf*, which he *pays* for the doing, and which is done for his Pleaſure.

You muſt therefore, if you would be conſiſtent with yourſelf, as much abhor the Thoughts of being at a *Play*, as of being a *Player* yourſelf. For to think that you muſt abhor the one, and not the other, is as abſurd as to ſuppoſe, that you muſt be temperate yourſelf, but may aſſiſt, encourage, and reward other People for their Intemperance. The Buſineſs of a *Player* is profane, wicked, lewd, and immodeſt: To be any way therefore approving, aſſiſting, or encouraging him in ſuch a Way of Life, is as evidently

evidently ſinful, as it is ſinful to aſſiſt and encourage a Man in *Stealing*, or any other Wickedneſs.

This argument is not far-fetched, or founded in any Subtilities of Reaſoning, but is ſo plain and obvious, that the meaneſt capacity muſt needs underſtand it. I may venture to challenge any one to ſhew me, that the Buſineſs of the *Player* is a more Chriſtian Employment than that of *Robbers*. For he muſt know very little of the Nature of Religion, that can look upon Luſt, Profaneneſs, and diſorderly Paſſions, to be leſs contrary to Religion, than the taking Money from the right Owner. And a Perſon who devotes himſelf to this Employment, to get his Bread by gratifying the corrupt Taſte of the World with wanton, wild, profane Diſcourſes, may be juſtly ſuppoſed to have a more corrupt Heart himſelf, than many a Man who has taken unlawful Ways of relieving his Wants.

I ſpeak to this Matter with thus much Plainneſs, becauſe there is ſo plain Reaſon for it, and becauſe I think, there is as much Juſtice and Tenderneſs in telling every Player that his Employment is abominably ſinful, and inconſiſtent with the Chriſtian, as in telling the ſame Thing to a *Thief*. As it ought to be reckoned no Sign of Enmity or Ill-will, if I ſhould attempt to prove to *Malefactors* the horrid Nature of their Sins, and the Neceſſity of a ſincere Repentance, ſo I hope it will not be looked upon as a Sign of ill Temper, or Anger at any particular Perſons, that I ſet the Buſineſs of Players among the moſt abominable Crimes. For it is with no other Intent, but that they themſelves may avoid the dreadful Guilt of ſo wicked a Profeſſion, and that other People may not dare any longer to ſupport them in it. For it certainly concerns all People, who are not ſo void of Religion as to be Players themſelves, to be ſtrictly careful that they have no Share in the Guilt of ſo unchriſtian a Profeſſion.

This we reckon very good Reaſoning in all other Caſes. A Perſon that dares not *ſteal*, thinks it equally ſinful to encourage Theft. Any one that abhors *Perjury*, or *Murder*, knows that he commits thoſe Sins, if he encourages other People in them. What therefore muſt we

think of ourſelves, if the Blaſphemy, Profaneneſs, Lewdneſs, Immodeſty, and wicked Rant of Plays, are Parts that we dare not act ourſelves, yet make it our Diverſion to be delighted with thoſe that do? Shall we think ourſelves more enlightened, or more reaſonable, than thoſe that worſhip *Images?* The Second Commandment cannot fright them from the uſe of Images, but it is becauſe they have had a ſuperſtitious Education, are taught to be blindly obedient, and have the Pretence of Piety for what they do. But all the groſſeſt Sins of the *Stage* cannot fright us from it, though we ſee the Sins, and have nothing to pretend for Compliance, but mere Idleneſs and Diverſion.

If any one was to collect all the fooliſh vain *Devotions*, which poor miſtaken Creatures have paid to *Images*, it would ſufficiently juſtify our Abhorrence of them, and ſhew the Wiſdom of the *Reformation* in aboliſhing the Uſe of them. But if a Perſon was to make a Collection of all the wicked, profane, blaſphemous, lewd, impudent, deteſtable Things, that are ſaid in the Play-Houſe only in *one Seaſon*, it would appear to be ſuch a Maſs of Sin, as would ſufficiently juſtify any one in ſaying, that the Buſineſs of Players is the moſt wicked and deteſtable Profeſſion in the World.

All People therefore who ever enter into their Houſe, or contribute the ſmalleſt Mite towards it, muſt look upon themſelves, as having been ſo far Friends to the moſt powerful Inſtruments of Debauchery, and to be guilty of contributing to a bold, open, and public Exerciſe of Impudence, Impurity, and Profaneneſs. When we encourage any good Deſign, either with our Conſent, our Money, or Preſence, we are apt to take a great deal of Merit to ourſelves; we preſently conclude that we are Partakers of all that is *good and praiſe-worthy in it*, of all the Benefit that ariſes from it, becauſe we are Contributors towards it. A Man does not think that he has no Share in ſome public Charity, becauſe he is but one in ten thouſand that contributes towards it; but if it be a religious Charity, and attended with great and happy Effects, his Conſcience tells him that he is a Sharer of *all* that great Good to which he contributes. Now let this teach us,

how

how we ought to judge of the Guilt of encouraging any thing that is bad, either with our *Conſent*, our *Money*, or our *Preſence*. We muſt not conſider how much our ſingle Part contributes towards it, nor how much leſs we contribute than ſeveral thouſands of other People, but we muſt look at the *whole thing* in itſelf, and whatever there is of Evil in it, or whatever Evil ariſes from it, we muſt charge ourſelves with a Share of the whole Guilt of ſo great an Evil. Thus it is that we hope and deſire to partake of the Merit of all good Deſigns, which we any way countenance and encourage; and thus it is that the Guilt of all wicked things, which we countenance and aſſiſt, will certainly be laid to our Charge.

To proceed now to a fourth Argument. When I conſider *Churches*, and the Matter of *Divine Service*, that it conſiſts of holy Readings, Prayers, and Exhortations to Piety, there is Reaſon to think, that the Houſe of God is a natural Means of promoting Piety and Religion, and rendering Men devout, and ſenſible of their Duty to God. The very Nature of Divine Aſſemblies, thus carried on, has this direct Tendency: I aſk you whether this is not very plain, that *Churches* thus employed ſhould have this Effect? Conſider therefore the *Play-Houſe*, and the Matter of the Entertainment there, as it conſiſts of *Love-Intrigues*, *blaſphemous Paſſions*, *profane Diſcourſes*, *lewd Deſcriptions*, *filthy Jeſts*, and all the moſt extravagant Rant of wanton profligate Perſons of both Sexes, heating and inflaming one another with all the *Wantonneſs* of Addreſs, the *Immodeſty* of Motion, and *Lewdneſs* of Thought, that Wit can invent; conſider, I ſay, whether it be not plain, that a Houſe ſo employed is as certainly ſerving the Cauſe of *Immorality* and *Vice*, as the Houſe of God is ſerving the Cauſe of *Piety?* For what is there in our *Church Service* that ſhews it to be *uſeful* to Piety and Holineſs, what is there in Divine Worſhip to correct and amend the Heart, but what is directly contrary to all that is doing in the *Play-Houſe?* So that one may with the ſame Aſſurance affirm, that the *Play-Houſe*, not only when ſome very profane Play is on the *Stage*, but in its *daily common* Entertainments, is as certainly the *Houſe of the Devil*, as the Church is the *Houſe of God*.

For though the Devil be not profeſſedly worſhipped by Hymns directed to him, yet moſt that is there ſung is to his Service; he is there *obeyed* and *pleaſed* in as certain a manner, as God is worſhipped and honoured in the Church.

You muſt eaſily ſee, that the Charge againſt the *Play-Houſe* is not the Effect of any *particular Temper*, or Weakneſs of Mind; that it is not an *uncertain Conjecture*, or *religious Whimſy*; but it is a Judgment founded as plainly in the *Nature* and *Reaſon* of Things, as when it is affirmed, that the Houſe of God is of Service to Religion: And he that abſolutely condemns the *Play-Houſe*, as wicked and of a corrupting Nature, proceeds upon as much Truth and Certainty, as he that abſolutely commends *the Houſe of God*, as holy and tending to promote Piety.

When therefore any one pretends to vindicate the *Stage* to you, as a proper Entertainment for holy and religious Perſons, you ought to reject the Attempt with as much Abhorrence, as if he ſhould offer to ſhew you, that our *Church Service* was rightly formed for thoſe Perſons to join in, who are *devoted to the Devil.* For to talk of the *Lawfulneſs* and *Uſefulneſs* of the *Stage* is full as abſurd, and contrary to the plain Nature of Things, as to talk of the Unlawfulneſs and Miſchief of the Service of the Church. He therefore that tells you, that you may ſafely go to the *Play-Houſe*, as an innocent uſeful Entertainment of your Mind, commits the ſame Offence againſt Common Senſe, as if he ſhould tell you, that it was dangerous to attend at Divine Service, and that its Prayers and Hymns were great *Pollutions* of the Mind.

For the Matter and Manner of *Stage Entertainments* are as undeniable Proofs, and as obvious to Common Senſe, that the Houſe belongs to the Devil, and is the Place of his Honour, as the Matter and Manner of *Church Service* prove that the Place is appropriated to God.

Obſerve therefore, that as you do not want the Aſſiſtance of any one to ſhew you the *Uſefulneſs* and *Advantage* of Divine Service, becauſe the thing is plain, and ſpeaks for itſelf, ſo neither, on the other hand, need you any one to ſhew the *Unlawfulneſs* and *Miſchief* of the Stage, becauſe there the thing is equally plain, and

ſpeaks

ſpeaks for itſelf. So that you are to conſider yourſelf as having the ſame Aſſurance, that the *Stage* is wicked, and to be abhorred and avoided by all Chriſtians, as you have, that the Service of the Church is holy, and to be ſought after by all Lovers of Holineſs. Conſider therefore, that your Conduct, with relation to the *Stage*, is not a Matter of *Nicety*, or *ſcrupulous Exactneſs*, but that you are as certain that you do wrong is as notorious a manner, when you go to the *Play-Houſe*, as you are certain that you do right, when you go to *Church*.

Now it is of mighty Uſe to conceive Things in a right manner, and to ſee them as they are in their own Nature. Whilſt you conſider the Play-Houſe only as a *Place of Diverſion*, it may perhaps give no Offence to your Mind, there is nothing *ſhocking* in the Thought of it; but if you would lay aſide this Name of it for a while, and conſider it in its *own Nature*, as it really is, you would find that you are as much deceived, if you conſider the *Play-Houſe* as only a *Place of Diverſion*, as you would be, if you conſidered the Houſe of God only as a place of *Labour*.

When therefore you are tempted to go to a *Play*, either from your own Inclination, or from the Deſire of a Friend, fancy that you was aſked in plain Terms to go to the Place of the *Devil's Abode*, where he holds his *filthy Court* of evil Spirits; that you was aſked to join in an Entertainment, where he was at the Head of it; where the whole of it was in order to his Glory, that Men's Hearts and Minds might be ſeparated from God, and plunged into all the Pollutions of Sin and Brutality. Fancy that you are going to a Place that as certainly belongs to the Devil, as the *heathen Temples* of old, where *Brutes* were worſhipped, where *wanton Hymns* were ſung to *Venus*, and drunken Songs to the God of Wine. Fancy that you are as certainly going to the Devil's *Triumph*, as if you was going to thoſe *old Sports*, where People committed Murder, and offered Chriſtians to be devoured by wild Beaſts for the Diverſion of the Spectators. Now whilſt you conſider the *Play-Houſe* in this View, I ſuppoſe you can no more go to a *Play*, than you can renounce your Chriſtianity.

Conſider

Consider now, therefore, that you have not been frighting yourself with *groundless Imaginations*, but that which you have here fancied of the *Play-House* is as strictly true, as if you had been fancying, that when you go to Church, you go to the House of God, where the heavenly Hosts attend upon his Service; and that when you read the Scriptures, and sing holy Hymns, you join with the Choirs above, and do God's Will on Earth, as it is done in Heaven. For observe, I pray you, how justly that Opinion of the *Play-House* is founded. For was it a Joy to God to see *Idols* worshipped, to see Hymns and Adorations offered up to impure and filthy Deities? Were Places and Festivals appointed for such Ends justly esteemed Places and Festivals devoted to the Devil? Now give the Reason why all this was justly reckoned a Service to the Devil, and you will give as good a Reason why the *Play-House* is to be esteemed his *Temple*.

For what though Hymns and Adorations are not offered to impure and filthy Deities, yet if *Impurity* and *Filthiness* is the *Entertainment*, if immodest Songs, profane Rant, if Lust and Passion entertain the Audience, the Business is the same, and the Assembly does the *same Honour* to the Devil, though they be not gathered together in the Name of some *Heathen God*.

For Impurity and Profaneness in the Worshippers of the True God is as acceptable a Service to the Devil, as Impurity and Profaneness in Idolaters; and perhaps a *lewd Song* in an Assembly of Christians, gives him a greater Delight than in a Congregation of *Heathens*.

If therefore we may say, that a *House* or *Festival* was the Devil's, because he was *delighted* with it, because what was there done was an *acceptable Service* to him, we may be assured that the *Play-House* is as really the House of the Devil, as any other House ever was. Nay, it is reasonable to think, that the *Play-Houses*, in this Kingdom are a greater Pleasure to him, than any *Temple* he ever had in the Heathen World. For as it is a greater Conquest to make the Disciples of Christ delight in *Lewdness* and *Profaneness* than ignorant Heathens, so a *House*, that, in the Midst of *Christian Churches*, trains up Christians to *Lewdness* and *Profaneness*, that makes the

Worſhippers of Chriſt flock together in Crowds, to rejoice in an Entertainment that is ſo contrary to the Spirit of Chriſt, as *Hell* is contrary to *Heaven*; a Houſe ſo employed may juſtly be reckoned a more delightful Habitation of the Devil, than any Temple in the Heathen World.

When therefore you go to the *Play-Houſe*, you have as much Aſſurance that you go to the Devil's peculiar Habitation, that you ſubmit to his Deſigns, and rejoice in his Diverſions, which are his beſt Devices againſt Chriſtianity, you have as much Aſſurance of this, as that they who worſhipped filthy Deities were in reality Worſhippers of the Devil.

Hence it appears, that if inſtead of conſidering the Play-Houſe as only a Place of Diverſion, you will but examine what Materials it is made of; if you will but conſider the Nature of the Entertainment, and what is there doing; you will find it as wicked a Place, as ſinful a Diverſion, and as truly the peculiar Pleaſure of the Devil, as any wicked Place, or ſinful Diverſion in the Heathen World. When therefore you are aſked to go to a Play, do not think that you are only aſked to go to a Diverſion, but be aſſured that you are aſked to *yield* to the Devil, to go over to his Party, and to make one of his Congregation. That if you do go, you have not only the Guilt of *buying* ſo much vain Communication, and paying People for being wicked, but are alſo as certainly guilty of going to the Devil's Houſe, and doing him the ſame Honour, as if you was to partake of ſome *Heathen Feſtival*. You muſt conſider, that all the Laughter there is not only vain and fooliſh, but that it is a Laughter among Devils, that you are upon profane Ground, and hearing Muſic in the very Porch of Hell.

Thus it is in the Reaſon of the thing. And if we ſhould now conſider the State of our *Play-Houſe*, as it is in Fact, we ſhould find it anſwering all theſe Characters, and producing Effects ſuitable to its Nature. But I ſhall forbear this Conſideration, it being as unneceſſary to tell the Reader, that our *Play-Houſe* is in Fact the *Sink of Corruption and Debauchery*; that it is the general Rendezvous of the moſt profligate Perſons of both Sexes; that it

corrupts the Air, and turns the adjacent Places into publick Nuisances; this is as unnecessary, as to tell him that the *Exchange* is a Place of *Merchandise*.

Now it is to be observed, that this is not the State of the *Play-House* through any accidental Abuse, as any innocent or good thing may be abused; but that Corruption and Debauchery are the truly natural and genuine Effects of the *Stage Entertainment*. Let not therefore any one say, that he is not answerable for those Vices and Debaucheries which are occasioned by the *Play-House*, for so far as he partakes of the Pleasure of the *Stage*, and is an Encourager of it, so far he is chargeable with those Disorders which necessarily are occasioned by it. If Evil arises from our doing our Duty, or our Attendance at any *good Design*, we are not to be frighted at it; but if Evil arises from any thing as its *natural* and *genuine* Effect, in all such Cases, so far as we contribute to the Cause, so far we make ourselves guilty of the Effects. So that all who any way assist the *Play-House*, or ever encourage it by their Presence, make themselves chargeable in some degree, with all the Evils and Vices which follow from it. Since therefore it cannot be doubted by any one, whether the *Play-House* be a Nursery of Vice, and Debauchery, since the evil Effects it has upon Peoples Manners is as visible as the Sun and Noon, one would imagine, that all People of *Virtue* and *Modesty* should not only avoid it, but avoid it with the utmost Abhorrence; that they should be so far from entring into it, that they should detest the very Sight of it. For what a Contradiction is it to common Sense, to hear a Woman lamenting the miserable Lewdness and Debauchery of the Age, the vicious Taste and irregular Pleasures of the World, and at the same time dressing herself to meet the lewdest Part of the World at the Fountain-head of all Lewdness, and making herself one of that Croud, where every abandoned Wretch is glad to be present? She may fancy that she hates and abominates their Vices, but she may depend upon it, that till she hates and abominates the Place of vicious Pleasures; till she dares not come near an Entertainment which is the Cause of so great Debauchery, and the Pleasure of the most debauched People; till she is thus disposed, she wants the truest Sign of a real and religious Abhorrence of the Vices of the Age.

For, to wave all other Conſiderations, I would only aſk her a Queſtion or two on the ſingle Article of *Modeſty*. What is Modeſty? Is it a little *mechanical outſide* Behaviour, that goes no farther than a few *Forms* and *Modes*, at particular Times and Places? Or is it a *real Temper*, a natural Diſpoſition of the Heart that is founded in *Religion?* Now if Modeſty is only a mechanical Obſervance of a little outſide Behaviour, then I can eaſily perceive how a modeſt Women may frequent *Plays*; there is no Inconſiſtency for ſuch a one to be one thing in one Place, and another in another Place; to diſdain an immodeſt Converſation, and yet at the ſame Time reliſh and delight in immodeſt and impudent Speeches in a publick *Play-Houſe*. But if Modeſty is a *real Temper* and Diſpoſition of the Heart that is founded on the Principles of Religion, then I confeſs I cannot comprehend, how a Perſon of ſuch Modeſty ſhould ever come twice into the Play-Houſe. For if it is Reaſon and Religion that have inſpired her with a modeſt Heart, that make her careful of her Behaviour, that make her hate and abhor every Word, or Look, or Hint in Converſation, that has the Appearance of Lewdneſs, that make her ſhun the Company of ſuch as talk with too much Freedom; if ſhe is thus modeſt in *common Life*, from a Principle of Religion, a Temper of Heart, is it poſſible for ſuch a one (I do not ſay to ſeek) but to bear with the Immodeſty and Impudence of the *Stage?* For muſt not Immodeſty and Impudence, muſt not looſe and wanton Diſcourſe be the ſame *hateful things*, and give the ſame Offence to the modeſt Mind, in one Place as in another? And muſt not that Place, which is the Seat of Immodeſty, where Men and Women are trained up in Lewdneſs, where almoſt every Day in the Year is a Day devoted to the fooliſh Repreſentations of *Rant*, *Luſt*, and *Paſſion*; muſt not ſuch a Place of all others be the moſt odious to the Mind, that is *truly modeſt* upon Principles of *Reaſon* and *Religion?* One would ſuppoſe, that ſuch a Perſon ſhould as much abominate the Place, as any other filthy Sight, and be as much offended with an Invitation to it, as if ſhe was invited to ſee an immodeſt Picture. For the Repreſentations of the *Stage*, the inflamed Paſſions of Lovers there deſcribed, are as groſs

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an Offence to the Ear, as any Repreſentation that can offend the Eye.

It ought not to be concluded, that becauſe I affirm the *Play-Houſe* to be an Entertainment *contrary* to Modeſty, that therefore I accuſe all People as void of Modeſty who ever go to it. I might affirm, that *Tranſubſtantiation* is contrary to all *Senſe* and *Reaſon*; but then it would be a wrong Concluſion, to ſay that I affirmed that all who believe it are void of all *Senſe* and *Reaſon*.

Now as *Prejudices*, the Force of *Education*, the Authority of *Numbers*, the Way of the World, the Example of *great Names*, may make People *believe*; ſo the ſame Cauſes may make People act againſt *all Senſe and Reaſon*, and be guilty of Practices which no more ſuit with the *Purity* of their Religion, than *Tranſubſtantiation* agrees with *Common Senſe*.

To proceed. *Trebonia* thus excuſes herſelf for going to the *Play-Houſe*. I go but ſeldom; and then either with my *Mother* or my *Aunt:* We always know the Play beforehand, and never go on the *Sacrament* Week: And what harm pray, ſays ſhe, can there be in this? It breaks in upon no Rules of my Life. I neglect no Part of my Duty; I go to *Church*, and perform the ſame Devotions at home as on the other Days.

It ought to be obſerved, that this Excuſe can only be allowed, where the Diverſion itſelf is innocent: It muſt therefore firſt be conſidered, what the Entertainment is in itſelf; whether it be ſuitable to the Spirit and Temper of Religion: For if it is right and proper in itſelf, it needs no Excuſe; but if it be *wrong* and *contrary* to Religion, we are not to uſe it *cautiouſly*, but to avoid it *conſtantly*.

Trebonia muſt be told, that it is no Proof of the Innocence of a Thing that it does not interfere with her *Hours of Duty*, nor break the Regularity of her Life; for very wicked Ways of ſpending Time may yet be conſiſtent with a regular Diſtribution of our Hours. She muſt therefore conſider, not only whether ſuch a Diverſion hinders the Regularity of her Life, or breaks in upon her Hours of Devotion, publick or private, but whether it hinders, or any way affects the *Spirit* and

Temper which all her Devotions aſpire after. Is it conformable to that heavenly Affection, that Love of God, that Purity of Heart, that Wiſdom of Mind, that Perfection of Holineſs, that Contempt of the World, that Watchfulneſs and Self denial, that Humility and Fear of Sin, which Religion requires? Is it conformable to thoſe Graces, which are to be the *daily Subject* of all her Prayers? This is the only way for her to know the *Innocence* of going to a Play. If what ſhe there hears and ſees has no *Contrariety* to any *Grace* or *Virtue* that ſhe prays for; if all that there paſſes be fit for the *Purity* and *Piety* of one that is led by the Spirit of Chriſt, and is *working out* her *Salvation with fear and trembling*; if the Stage be an Entertainment that may be thought to be according to the Will of God; then ſhe diſpoſes of an Hour very innocently, though her *Mother* or her *Aunt* were not with her.

But if the *contrary* to all this be true; if moſt of what ſhe there *hears* and *ſees* be as contrary to the *Piety* and *Purity* of Chriſtianity, as *Feaſting* is contrary to *Faſting*: if the *Houſe* which ſhe ſupports with her *Money*, and encourages with her *Preſence*, be a notorious Means of Corruption, viſibly carrying on the Cauſe of *Vice* and *Debauchery*; ſhe muſt not think herſelf excuſed for being with her *Mother*.

Trebonia would perhaps think it ſtrange, to hear one of her virtuous Acquaintance giving the like Reaſon for going now and then to a *Maſquerade*.

Now this Diverſion is new in our Country; and therefore moſt People *yet* judge of it in the Manner that they ought, becauſe they are not blinded by *Uſe and Cuſtom*. But let any one give but the true Reaſons, why a Perſon of Virtue and Piety ſhould not go to *Maſquerades*, and the ſame Reaſons will as plainly ſhew, that Perſons of Virtue and Piety ſhould keep at as great a diſtance from the *Play-houſe*. For the Entertainment of the *Stage* is more directly oppoſite to the Purity of Religon than *Maſquerades*, and is beſides as certain a Means of Corruption, and ſerves all bad Ends in as great a degree as they do. They only differ, as bad Things of the ſame Kind may differ from one another So that if the evil Uſe, and ill Conſequences of *Maſquerades*, be a ſufficient

ficient Reaſon to deter People of Piety from partaking of them, the ſame evil Uſe, and ill Conſequences of the *Stage*, ought to keep all People of Virtue from it. If People will conſult their *Tempers* only, they may take the Entertainment of one, and condemn the other; as following the ſame Guide, they may abhor *Intemperance*, and indulge *Malice*: But if they will conſult Religion, and make that the Ground of their Opinions, they will find more and ſtronger Reaſons for a *conſtant Abhorrence* of the *Stage* than of *Maſquerades*.

Again: If *Trebonia* ſhould hear a Perſon excuſing her Uſe of *Paint* in this manner; That truly ſhe painted but *very ſeldom*; that ſhe always ſaid her Prayers firſt; that ſhe never uſed it on *Sundays*, or the Week before the *Communion*: *Trebonia* would pity ſuch a *Mixture* of Religion and Weakneſs. She would deſire her to uſe her Reaſon, and either to allow *Painting* to be innocent, ſuitable to the *Sobriety* and *Humility* of a Chriſtian, or elſe to think it as unlawful at one Time as at another. But, *Trebonia*, would you not think it ſtill ſtranger, that ſhe ſhould condemn *Painting* as *odious* and *ſinful*, and yet think that the *Regularity* of her Life, and the *Exactneſs* of her Devotions, might make it lawful for her to paint *now* and *then*?

I doubt not but you plainly ſee the Weakneſs and Folly of ſuch a Pretence for *Painting*, under ſuch Rules, at certain times. And if you would but as impartially conſider your Pretences for going ſometimes to the Play-Houſe under the ſame Rules, you would certainly find them more weak and unreaſonable. For *Painting* may with more Reaſon be reckoned an *innocent Ornament*, than the Play-Houſe an *innocent Diverſion*. And it ſuppoſes a greater *Vanity* of Mind, a more *perverted* Judgment, and a deeper Corruption of Heart, to ſeek the Diverſion of the *Stage*, than to take the Pleaſure of a *borrowed Colour*. Painting, when conſidered in itſelf, is undoubtedly a great Sin; but when it is compared to the Uſe of the Stage, it is but as the *Mote* compared to the *Beam*.

I know you are offended at this *Compariſon*, becauſe you judge by your *Temper* and *Prejudices*, and do not

conſider the things as they are in themſelves, by the pure Light of *Reaſon* and *Religion*. *Painting* has not been the way of your Family; it is ſuppoſed to be the Practice but of *very few*; and thoſe who uſe it endeavour to *conceal* it: This makes you readily condemn it. On the contrary, your *Mother* and your *Aunt* carry you to the *Play*; you ſee *virtuous* People there, and the ſame Perſons that fill your *Churches*; ſo that your *Temper* is as much engaged to think it lawful to go ſometimes to a *Play*, as it is engaged to think the Uſe of *Paint* always odious and ſinful

Lay aſide therefore theſe Prejudices for a while, and fancy that you had been trained up in ſome Corner of the World in the Principles of Chriſtianity, and had never heard either of the *Play-Houſe* or *Painting*. Imagine now that you was to examine the Lawfulneſs of them by the Doctrines of Scripture; you would firſt deſire to be told the Nature of theſe Things, and what they meant. You would be told, that *Painting* was the borrowing of *Colours* from Art, to make the Face look more beautiful. Now though you found no expreſs Text of Scripture againſt *Painting*, you would find that it was expreſly againſt Tempers required in Scripture; you would therefore condemn it, as proceeding from a vanity of Mind, and Fondneſs of Beauty. You would ſee that the Harm of Painting conſiſted in this, that it proceeded from a Temper of Mind contrary to the Sobriety and Humility of a Chriſtian, which indeed is harm enough; becauſe this Humility and Sobriety of Mind is as eſſential to Religion, as Charity and Devotion. So that in judging according to Scripture, you would hold it as unreaſonable to *paint ſometimes*, as to be ſometimes *malicious*, *indevout*, *proud*, or *falſe*.

You are now to conſider the *Stage*; you are to keep cloſe to Scripture, and fancy that you yet know nothing of *Plays*. You aſk therefore firſt, what the *Stage* or *Play-Houſe* is? You are told that it is a *Place* where all ſorts of People meet to be entertained with *Diſcourſes*, *Actions*, and *Repreſentations*, which are recommended to the Heart by beautiful Scenes, the Splendor of Lights, and the Harmony of Muſic. You are told that theſe Diſcourſes

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are the Invention of Men of Wit and Imagination, which deſcribe imaginary *Intrigues* and *Scenes* of *Love*, and introduce *Men* and *Women* diſcourſing, raving, and acting in all the wild indecent Tranſports of *Luſt* and *Paſſion*. You are told that the Diverſion partly conſiſts of *lewd* and *profane* Songs ſung to fine Muſic, and partly of extravagant Dialogues between *immodeſt Perſons* talking in a Stile of *Love* and *Madneſs*, that is no where elſe to be found, and entertaining the *Chriſtian Audience* with all the Violence of Paſſion, Corruption of Heart, Wantonneſs of Mind, Immodeſty of Thought, and profane Jeſts, that the Wit of the *Poet* is able to invent. You are told, that the *Players*, Men and Women, are trained up to act and repreſent all the Deſcriptions of Luſt and Paſſion in the *livelieſt manner*, to add a Lewdneſs of Action to lewd Speeches; that they get their Livelihood by *Curſing*, *Swearing* and *Ranting* for three Hours together to an Aſſembly of *Chriſtians*.

Now though you find no particular Text of Scripture condemning the *Stage*, or *Tragedy* or *Comedy*, in expreſs Words; yet what is much more, you find that ſuch Entertainments are a groſs Contradiction to the *whole Nature* of Religion; they are not contrary to this or that particular Temper, but are contrary to that *whole Turn of Heart* and *Mind* which Religion requires. Painting is contrary to *Humility*, and therefore is to be avoided as ſinful; but the Entertainment of the *Stage*, as it conſiſts of *blaſphemous* Expreſſions, *wicked* Speeches, *ſwearing*, *curſing*, and *profaning* the Name of God, as it abounds with *impious* Rant, *filthy* Jeſts, *diſtracted* Paſſions, groſs Deſcriptions of *Luſt*, and *wanton* Songs, is a *Contradiction to every Doctrine* that our Saviour and his Apoſtles have taught us. So that to abhor Painting at all times, becauſes it ſuppoſes a Vanity of Mind, and is contrary to Humility, and yet think there is a lawful Time to go to the *Play-Houſe*, is as contrary to Common Senſe, as if a Man ſhould hold that it was lawful ſometimes to offend againſt *all the Doctrines* of Religion, and yet always unlawful to offend againſt *any one* Doctrine of Religion.

If therefore you was to come (as I ſuppoſed) from ſome Corner of the World, where you had been uſed to live

and judge by the Rules of Religion, and upon your Arrival here had been told what Painting and the *Stage* were; as you would not expect to see Persons of *religious Humility* carrying their Daughters to *Paint-Shops*, or inviting their pious Friends to go along with them, so much less would you expect to hear that *devout*, *pious*, and *modest* Women carried their Daughters, and invited their virtuous Friends to meet them at the Play. Least of all could you imagine, that there were any People too *pious* and *devout* to indulge the Vanity of *Painting*, and yet not devout and pious enough to abhor the Immodesty Profaneness, Ribaldry, Immorality, and Blasphemy of the *Stage*,

To proceed. A *polite Writer* * of a late Paper thought he had sufficiently ridiculed a certain Lady's Pretensions to *Piety*, when, speaking of her *Closet*, he says,

Together lie her Prayer-Book and Paint,
At once t'improve the Sinner and the Saint.

Now, whence comes it that this Writer judges so rightly, and speaks the Truth so plainly, in the Matter of Painting? Whence comes it that the generality of his Readers think his Observation just, and join with him in it? It is because Painting is not yet an *acknowledged Practice*, but is for the most part reckoned a *shameful Instance* of Vanity. Now as we are not prejudicied in favour of this Practice, and have no Excuses to make for our *own Share* in it, so we judge of it impartially, and immediately perceive its Contrariety to a Religious *Temper* and *State* of Mind. This *Writer* saw this in so strong a Light, that he does not scruple to suppose, that *Paint* is as natural and proper a Means to improve the *Sinner*, as the Prayer-Book is to improve the Saint.

I should therefore hope, that it need not be imputed to any *Sourness* of Temper, Religious *Weakness*, or *Dulness* of Spirits, if a *Clergyman* should imagine, that the *Profaneness*, *Debauchery*, *Lewdness*, and *Blasphemy* of the *Stage*, are the natural Means to improve the *Sinner*, as the *Bottle of Paint:* Or if he should venture to shew, that the *Church* and the *Play-House* are as ridiculous a Contradiction, and do no more suit with the same Person, than the *Prayer-Book and Paint*.

I shall

* *Spectator*, N°. 79.

I ſhall now make a Reflection or two upon the preſent celebrated Entertainment of the *Stage*, which is ſo much to the Taſte of the People, that it has been acted almoſt every Night one whole Seaſon.

The firſt Scene is ſaid to be a *magnificent Palace diſcovered: Venus attended with Graces and Pleaſures.*

Now how is it poſſible, that ſuch a Scene as this ſhould be fit for the Entertainment of Chriſtians? Can *Venus* and her *Graces* and *Pleaſures* talk any Language that is *like* themſelves, but what muſt be *unlike* to the Spirit of Chriſtianity? The very propoſing ſuch a Scene as this ſuppoſes the Audience to be fit for the Entertainment of *Luſt* and *Wantonneſs*. For what elſe can *Venus* and her *Pleaſures* offer to them? Had we any Thing of the Spirit of Chriſtianity in us, or were earneſtly deſirous of thoſe holy Tempers which are to render us pure in the Eyes of God, we ſhould abominate the very Propoſal of ſuch a Scene as this, as knowing that it muſt be an Entertainment fitter for *public Stews*, than for People who make any Pretences to the Holineſs and Purity of the Spirit of Chriſt. The Scripture ſays, *Mortify therefore your Members which are upon Earth, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiſcence.* This is the Religion by which we are to be ſaved. But can the Wit of Man invent any thing more contrary to this, that an Entertainment from *Venus* attended with her *Pleaſures?* That People ſhould have ſuch a Religion as this, and at the ſame time ſuch an Entertainment, is an aſtoniſhing Inſtance of the Degeneracy of the preſent State of Chriſtianity among us. For if the firſt Scene had been the *Devil attended with Fiends, curſing and blaſpheming*, no one could ſhew that ſuch a Scene was more contrary to the Religion of *Chriſtians* than a Scene with *Venus* and her *Pleaſures*. And if the Devil himſelf had been conſulted by our *Stage Wits*, which of theſe Scenes he had rather have, he would certainly have choſen *Venus* and her *Pleaſures*, as much fitter to debauch and corrupt a Chriſtian Audience than a Scene of *curſing* and *blaſpheming*.

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The Scripture thus deſcribes the Infatuation of the old Idolaters. *And none conſidereth in his Heart, neither is there Knowledge nor Underſtanding to ſay, I have burnt Part of it in the Fire; yea, I have alſo baked Bread upon the Coals thereof, and ſhall I make the Reſidue thereof, an Abomination? Shall I fall down to the Stock of a Tree*?* It is here reckoned a ſtrange Inſtance of their Blindneſs, that they did not make ſo eaſy a Reflection upon the nature of Things. But how near are we to this Blindneſs, if we do not make as eaſy a Reflection upon this Entertainment; for the very mentioning of ſuch a *Scene* as this, is as plain a Demonſtration that the Entertainment is contrary to our Religion, as the *burning* of Wood and its falling into *Aſhes* is a Demonſtration that Wood is of a Nature contrary to God. How are we therefore more enlightened, if none of us conſiders in his Heart, neither is there Knowledge nor Underſtanding in us to ſay, *Theſe are the filthy Deities of the Devil's Invention, with which he polluted and defiled the Heathen World. And ſhall we ſtill preſerve their Power among us? Shall we make ſuch Abominations our Diverſion?*

For if we worſhip the God of *Purity*, if we cannot worſhip him but with Hearts devoted to Purity, what have we to do with theſe Images of Lewdneſs? If we dreſs a *Venus*, and celebrate her Power, and make her *Graces* and *Pleaſures* meet us in wanton *Forms* and wanton *Language*, is it not as abſurd, as contrary to our Religion, as to ſet up a *Baal* in the Temple of God? What greater Contradiction is there, either to Reaſon or Religion, in one Caſe than in the other? *Baal* is as fit for our Devotions, as *Venus* is for our Rejoicings and Praiſes.

So that the very naming of ſuch a Scene as this is *unlawful Language*, and carries as great a Contrariety to our Religion, as the Worſhip of *Baal*.

Two Women, (whom I ſuppoſe to be baptized Chriſtians) repreſent *Venus* and *Diana* ſinging, and celebrating their Luſts and Wantonneſs, *as the Sweets that Life improve*.

Now

* *Iſaiah* xliv. 19.

Now if a common *Proſtitute* was to come drunk out of a *Brandy Shop*, ſinging their Words, ſhe would act like herſelf. No one could ſay that ſhe had forgot her Character, or was ſinging one way, and *living* another. And I dare ſay, there is no *Rake* in the Audience ſo debauched, as not to think this a ſufficient Celebration of the Praiſes and Happineſs of his Pleaſures.

But what do other People do there? Is there any Entertainment in this Place for *pious*, *ſober*, and *devout* Minds? Does it become them to ſing the Praiſes of Debauchery, or ſit among thoſe that do?

When we hear of a *Witches Feaſt*, we do not hear of any but *Witches* that go to it: The Mirth and Joy of ſuch Meetings is left wholly to themſelves. Now if theſe impudent Celebrations of *Venus* and her *Pleaſures* were left wholly to *Rakes* and *Proſtitutes*; if we reckoned it an Entertainment as contrary to Religion as a *Witches Feaſt*; it would only ſhew that we judged as rightly in one Caſe as in the other. And indeed one would think, that no Chriſtian need to be told, that *Venus* and her *Graces* are as much the Devil's *Machinery*, as *Witches* and *Imps*.

To proceed. If a Perſon in Converſation was to addreſs himſelf to a *modeſt* Lady in the Words of this Entertainment, ſhe would think herſelf very ill uſed, and that ſhe ought to reſent ſuch Treatment. She would think that her *Modeſty* might well be queſtioned, if ſhe bore ſuch Language.

But how it is conſiſtent with ſuch Modeſty, to hire People to entertain her with the ſame Language in Publick, is a Difficulty nor eaſily to be explained. Can *Fathers* and *Mothers*, who ſit here with their Children, recommend Purity to them at Home, when they have carried them to hear the Praiſes of Lewdneſs, as the *Sweets which Life improve?*

If a Perſon was to make a public Harangue in favour of *Image-Worſhip*, telling us, that it was the fineſt Means of raiſing the Heart to a Delight in God, we ſhould think him a *very wicked Man*, and that the Ears

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and Hearts of Chriſtians ought to deteſt ſuch Diſcourſes. Yet Chriſtian People can meet in Crowds, and give their Money to have repeated in their Ears, what are here ſaid to be *the Sweets which Life improve.* This, it ſeems, is no *Idolatry.*

We are told in Scripture that *Covetouſneſs* is *Idolatry*; and the Reaſon is, becauſe it alienates the Heart from God, and makes it reſt in ſomething elſe. The covetous Man is an *Idolater*, becauſe his Heart ſays, that *Gain* and *Bags* of Gold are the *Sweets which Life improve.* And can we think that that corrupt Heart, that celebrates *Luſt* and *Wantonneſs* as the *Sweets which Life improve*, is guilty of *leſs Idolatry* than he that ſays the ſame thing of Riches? As ſure as there is ſuch a Sin as *Idolatry*, as ſure as the ſordid *Miſer* is guilty of it, ſo ſure is it that theſe Words are chargeable, not only with exceſſive *Immodeſty*, but plain *Idolatry.* For how do we think that the *Pagans* worſhipped *Venus?* We cannot ſuppoſe that it was with *Faſting* and *Prayer*, or any *ſerious* Devotion. No; they paid her ſuch a Devotion, as the *Stage* now does; they called upon her in *lewd* Songs, and prailed her in praiſing the Pleaſures of Luſt and Impurity, in rejoicing in her mighty Power, and celebrating her Pleaſures as the *Sweets which Life improve.*

Theſe Women go on, and with Muſic and Voices, as wanton as their Words, are employed to make a deeper Impreſſion on the Hearts of the Audience. Then enter *Bacchus*, *Pan*, and *Silenus*, attended with *Satyrs*, *Fawns*, and *Sylvans.*

And indeed, they enter very properly; for the Diſcourſe is very agreeable to their Nature. But what have Chriſtians to do with this Company? Do they come here to *renounce* their Religion? Or can they think that this Society, with the moſt beaſtly *Images* that the Heathen World could invent, is a Society that they make partake of without *renouncing* Chriſt?

Our Religion charges us, not to *keep Company, if any one that is called a Brother be a Fornicator**, &c. But where

* 1 *Cor.* v. 11.

where have we left our Religion, if we not only accompany with People devoted to Impurity, but make their Company our Delight, and *hire* them to entertain us with all the lewd Imaginations that can be invented? If we are not content with this, but *conjure* up all the impure *Fictions* of the Heathen World, and make their *imaginary Deities* more vile and wanton than ever they made them, to render them agreeable to our Chriſtian Minds, ſhall we reckon this among our *ſmall Sins?* Shall we think it a pardonable Infirmity, or partake of ſuch Entertainment as this?

The Apoſtle ſays, *Ye cannot drink the Cup of the Lord, and the Cup of Devils: Ye cannot be Partakers of the Lord's Table, and the Table of Devils**. And can we think that we are not drinking the Cup of Devils, or that we are not at the Devil's Table, when his moſt favourite Inſtruments of Impiety, *Venus*, *Bacchus*, *Silenus*, *Satyrs*, and *Fawns*, are the Company that we meet to be entertained with? If this is not being at the Devil's Table, he had no Table in the Heathen World. For ſurely, they who call up Devils to their Entertainment, who cannot be enough delighted unleſs the impious Demons of the Heathen World converſe with them, are in a ſtricter Communication with the Devil, than they who only eat of that Meat which had been offered in Sacrifice.

Our bleſſed Saviour ſays, *He that looketh upon a Woman to luſt after her, hath already committed Adultery with her in his Heart.* Can we reckon ourſelves his Diſciples, who hire our Fellow-Chriſtians, and Chriſtian Women, whoſe chief Ornament is a ſincere Modeſty, to ſing in merry Aſſemblies ſuch Words as are uſed in this Entertainment.

Who can ſay that I carry Matters too high, when I call this *renouncing* Chriſtianity? For, can any Words be more expreſsly contrary to the Doctrine of our Saviour, and that in ſo important a Point? and does not he ſufficiently renounce Chriſtianity, who renounces ſo great a Doctrine, that has Chriſt for its Author?

If we were to make a Jeſt of the *Sacraments* in our merry Aſſemblies, we ſhould ſhew as much Regard to Chriſ-

* 1 *Cor.* x. 21.

Chriſtianity, as by ſuch Diſcourſes as theſe. For all *lewd Diſcourſes* are as plainly contrary to eſſential Doctrines of Scripture, as any Ridicule upon the Sacraments that can be invented. It may be you could not ſit in the *Play-Houſe*, if you ſaw *Baptiſm* made a Jeſt of, and its Uſe reproached. But pray, why do not you think that there is as much *Profaneneſs* and *Irreligion* in impudent Speeches and Songs? Has not Chriſt ſaid as much about *Purity* of Heart, as about either of the *Sacraments?* Has not he made Chaſtity of Heart as neceſſary to Salvation as the Sacraments? How comes it then, that an impudent Praiſe of Luſt and Wantonneſs is not as *profane*, as a Ridicule upon the Sacraments? What Rule of Reaſon or Religion do you go by, when you think it highly ſinful to ſit and hear the *Sacraments* jeſted upon, and yet are chearful and delighted with ſuch Songs and Diſcourſes, as ridicule *Chaſtity* of Heart, and religious *Modeſty?* Can you ſuppoſe, that in the Eyes of God you appear as a better Chriſtian, than thoſe who make merry with profaning the Sacraments? If you can think this, you muſt hold that the Sacraments are more eſſential to Religion than *Purity* of Heart; and that it is more acceptable to God to *waſh*, than to be *clean*; more pleaſant to him to treat the *Altar* as holy, than to live in *Holineſs* of Heart.

The Sacraments have nothing valuable in their own Nature; they are only uſeful to Chriſtians, and to be treated with Reverence, becauſe Chriſt has appointed them as Means of Holineſs. But Purity and Chaſtity of Heart is an eſſential and internal Excellence, that by its own Nature perfects the Soul, and renders it more acceptable to God. To abhor therefore a Jeſt upon the *Sacraments*, and yet divert ourſelves with *impure* Rant and *lewd* Songs, is being like thoſe who *abhor Idols*, and yet *commit Sacrilege.*

All therefore who partake of this ſinful Entertainment, who take their Share of Mirth in ſuch Scenes of Impurity and Lewdneſs, muſt look upon themſelves, not only as Offenders againſt the Laws of *Purity*, but alſo as chargeable with ſuch *Irreligion* and *Profaneneſs*, as they are who

who are merry in ſuch Meetings as ridicule and deride the Uſe of the Holy Sacraments.

It is a great Aggravation of the Guilt of theſe Aſſemblies, that Women are employed to lay aſide the peculiar Ornament of their Sex, and to add an Immodeſty of Action and Addreſs to immodeſt Speeches. If we knew of an Aſſembly, where Clergymen met to ridicule the *ſacred Rites* of Religion for the ſake of entertaining the Audience with *Eloquence*; if we ſhould find that great Part of the Audience were *Clergymen*, who could not forbear an Entertainment ſo contrary to their Profeſſion; it would eaſily be ſeen, that ſuch a ſinful Entertainment was more unreaſonable becauſe Clergymen acted in it, and Clergymen came to be entertained with it.

Now this is the Caſe of the Stage Entertainment. Women are as particularly called to a *ſingular Modeſty*, as Clergymen are to the Duties of their Profeſſion. If therefore Women act Parts in lewd and impudent Entertainments, they have as much forgot themſelves, and appear as *deteſtable*, as Clergymen that talk *profanely*. And if other Women come to delight themſelves with ſeeing their *Siſters* acting ſo contrary to themſelves, and the peculiar Duties of their Condition, they as much forget themſelves, as thoſe *Clergy* who ſhould meet to ſee their *Brethren* raiſe Diverſion out of *Profaneneſs*. When therefore virtuous and prudent Women think they may go to the *Stage*, where Women ſo openly depart from the Decencies which are neceſſary to their Sex, let them conſider what they would think of ſuch virtuous and prudent Divines, as ſhould meet to ſee Clergymen openly contradict the duties of their ſacred Office. For it is the ſame Abſurdity, for modeſt Women to take Pleaſure in a Diverſion where Women are *immodeſt*, as for a good Clergyman to be pleaſed with a Meeting where Clergymen are *profane*. This muſt be owned to be ſtrictly true, unleſs it can be ſhewn, that *Impudence* and *Immodeſty* are not ſo contrary to the Duties of *Women*, as *Profaneneſs* is contrary to the Duty of a *Clergyman*. For if there is the ſame Contrariety, then it muſt be equally monſtrous for Women to encourage a number of Women in an immodeſt way of

Life, as for *Biſhops* and *Prieſts* to encourage a Number of Clergymen in a State of *Profaneneſs*.

Let us now take one Step farther in this Entertainment. The *Stage* has now upon it, *Venus*, *Bacchus*, *Silenus*, *Pan*, *Satyrs*, *Fawns*, *Sylvans*, *Bacchanals*, and *Bacchantes*. Now, if there were really ſuch Beings as theſe, one would not wonder to ſee them got together. As they have all one common Nature of *Vileneſs*, they are ſufficiently recommended to one another. But is it not aſtoniſhing, that theſe *fictitious Beings*, which are only imaginary Repreſentations of ſuch *Luſt*, *Senſuality*, and *Madneſs*, as never had any real Exiſtence, but were invented by the Devil for the Deluſion of the Heathen World, ſhould be preſerved to talk their filthy Language to Congregations of *Chriſtians?* And perhaps *Silenus* never ſo publicly recommended *Luſt* and *Impudence* in any Heathen Aſſembly, as he does here among Chriſtians. For our *Stage* has made him a fine Singer, that his Lewdneſs may have all the Recommendation which can be had from it.

Surely not one will now think that I carried the Charge too high, when I called the *Play-Houſe* the Houſe of the *Devil*; for if his *fictitious Beings*, talking his Language, and acting ſuch Parts as they do, be not a ſufficient Proof that it is his Work that is here carrying on, it is in vain to pretend to prove any thing; there is no Certainty that two and two are four.

If our Eyes could ſhew us the *holy Angels* in our Church-Aſſemblies, it would not be a ſtronger Proof of the Divine Preſence, than the ſeeing ſuch Images as theſe and hearing their Language is a Proof that the *Stage* is the Devil's Ground. For how can he more certainly aſſure us of his Preſence in any Place, than by *Satyrs*, *Bacchanals*, *Bacchantes*, and ſuch like Images of Lewdneſs? He cannot appear to us as a Spirit, he muſt therefore get ſuch *Beings* as *theſe* to appear for him; or, what ſeems to be more to his Purpoſe, make deluded Chriſtians ſupply their Places. If therefore there be any certain Marks of the Devil's Power or Preſence in any Aſſemblies, Places, or Temples of the Heathen World, the ſame are as certain Marks of his Power and Preſence in our *Play-Houſe*.

Again:

Again: Is it any Argument that the *Church* is God's Houſe, becauſe we there meet the *Miniſters* of God, who act in his Name; becauſe we there ſing divine Hymns, hear holy Inſtructions, and raiſe out Hearts unto God and heavenly Matters; is this any Proof that we are then drawn near to God? If therefore there be a Place ſet apart for *lewd* and *profane* Diſcourſes, where the ſame Beings are introduced as filled Heathen Temples, where we celebrate their Power, and praiſe their Being with wanton Songs and impure Rant, and where we open our Hearts to the Impreſſions of wild and diſordered Paſſions, is not this as certain a Proof, that ſuch a *Place* muſt belong to ſome Being that is *contrary* to God, and that we are then as certainly drawn near to him? He that does not ſee this with a ſufficient Clearneſs, could never have ſeen that the Devil had any Power or Worſhip in the Heathen World. You muſt therefore obſerve, the *Play-Houſe* is not called the Houſe of the Devil, only by way of Terror, and to fright you from a bad Place; but it is called ſo, becauſe it really is ſo in the ſtricteſt, fulleſt Senſe of the Words.

Let us now ſuppoſe, that the Diſorders of the Stage cannot drive you from it; and that you are no more offended at the Meeting of theſe filthy Demons of the Heathen World, than if you was to meet your Friends.

If this be your Caſe, how will you prove that your Religion has had any Effect upon you, or that it has done you the leaſt good? For if the ſame Lewdneſs and Immorality pleaſe you, which pleaſed the Worſhippers of *Venus*; if you delight in ſuch *Rant* and *Madneſs* as was the Delight of *Bacchanals* and *Bacchantes*, is not this a Proof that you have the ſame *Heart* and *Temper* that they had? And if you are like Idolaters in that which conſtituted their Idolatry, have you any Reaſon to think that Chriſtianity has had any Effect upon you? It would even be *Profaneneſs* in any one to pretend to the true Spirit of Chriſtianity, ſo long as he can take Pleaſure in ſuch an Entertainment as this. For what is there that is unlike to the Spirit of Chriſt, if this is not? Who that can rejoice in the Lewdneſs and Beſtiality of *Silenus*, and the impure Rant of vile Demons, can make any Pretences to a reaſonable Piety? Does this Company look as if we

had any thing holy and divine in our Tempers? Is this living in the Spirit of Chriſt? Is this the way to be as the Angels of God when we die? Shall we go from the Pleaſures of *Bacchus*, *Silenus*, *Bacchanals*, and *Bacchantes*, to the Choir of bleſſed Spirits that are above? Is there any Reaſonableneſs or Fitneſs in theſe Things? Why ſhould we think, that ſuch a Life as this will have an End ſo contrary to it?

We reckon it ſtrange Groſſneſs of Mind in the *Turks* to expect a *Paradiſe* of carnal Delights. But what a Degree of Groſſneſs is it in us, to know the God of Purity, and hope for a Heaven which only the *pure in Heart* ſhall enjoy, and yet call up all the wild *Fictions* of Luſt and Senſuality that corrupted the Heathen World to entertain our Hearts, that from their Mouths we may hear the Praiſes of Debauchery and Wantonneſs? Let any one but conſider this, as every thing ought to be conſidered, by the pure Light of Reaſon and Religion, and he will find that the Uſe of the Stage may be reckoned amongſt our worſt Sins, and that it is as great a Contradiction to our Religion, as any Corruption or vile Practice of the Heathen World.

I have made theſe few Reflections upon this Entertainment, not becauſe it exceeds the ordinary Wickedneſs of the Stage, but for the contrary Reaſon, becauſe it is far ſhort of it, and is much leſs offenſive than moſt of our *Plays*; that by ſhewing the *Stage* to be ſo impious and deteſtable, ſo contradictory to all Chriſtian Piety in an Entertainment that is moderate, if compared with almoſt all our Plays, there might be no Room left for ſober Chriſtians to be at any Peace with it. They who would ſee how much the Impieties of the Stage exceed what I have here obſerved of this Entertainment, may conſult Mr. *Collier*'s Short View of the Stage, Sir *Richard Blackmore*'s Eſſays, and *A ſerious Remonſtrance*, &c. by Mr. *Bedford*.

To return: *Levis* hears all theſe Arguments againſt the *Stage*; he owns they are very plain, and ſtrictly prove all that they pretend to; he does not offer one Word againſt them; but ſtill *Levis* has an Anſwer for them *all*, without anſwering any *one* of them. "I have, ſays he, my

"own

" own Experience, that theſe Diverſions never did me " any hurt, and therefore I ſhall uſe them."

But *Levis* does not conſider, that this very Anſwer ſhews, that he is very much hurt by them; that they have ſo much diſordered his Underſtanding, that he will defend his Uſe of them in the moſt abſurd manner imaginable, rather than be driven from them by any Arguments from Religion. For how can a Man ſhew that he is more hurt by any Practice, or that it has more blinded and perverted his Mind, than by appealing to his own inward Experience in Defence of it, againſt the plain Nature and Reaſon of things? Let *Levis* look at this way of reaſoning in other Matters. If a perſon that prays in an *unknown Tongue*, ſhould diſregard all the Arguments that are brought to ſhew the Abſurdity of it, and reſt contented with ſaying, that it never hurt his Devotion, but that he was as much affected in that way, as he could poſſibly be in any other, *Levis* would certainly tell ſuch a one, that he had loſt his Underſtanding, and that his long Uſe of ſuch abſurd Devotions made him talk ſo abſurdly about them.

Again: If a Worſhipper of *Images* was, in Anſwer to the Second Commandment, only to ſay, that he had his own Experience that he found no hurt by them; and that he had the ſame Devotion of Heart to God, as if he did not worſhip *Images:* Or, ſuppoſe another Perſon to keep very ill Company; and when he his told that *Evil Communications corrupt good Manners*, ſhould content himſelf with ſaying, that he would ſtill uſe the ſame ill Company, becauſe he was ſure it did him no hurt, nor made any Impreſſion upon him: Now as *Levis* would be ſure that a Man was notoriouſly hurt by the Worſhip of *Images*, that ſhould thus blindly defend them, and that the other is ſufficiently hurt by ill Company, who ſhould ſo obſtinately ſtick to it, ſo he ought to be as ſure that he himſelf is ſufficiently hurt either by Plays, or ſomething elſe, when with an equal Blindneſs he defends his Uſe of them.

Farther: When *Levis* ſays, that he is ſure that the Uſe of Plays does him no harm, let him conſider what he means by that Speech. Does he mean, that though

he uſes the Diverſion of the Stage, yet he finds himſelf in the true State of Religion; that he has all thoſe holy Tempers in that Degree of Perfection which Chriſtianity requires? Now if he cannot ſay this; how can he ſay, he is ſure that Plays do him no harm? If a Perſon was to affirm, that Intemperance did him no hurt, it would be expected that he ſhould own that he was in a perfect State of Health: For if he had any Diſorder or ill Habit of Body, he could not ſay, that his Intemperance did not contribute towards it. In like manner, if *Levis* will maintain that Plays do no ways diſorder him, or corrupt his Heart; he muſt affirm, that he has no Diſorder or Corruption of Heart belonging to him; for if he has, he cannot ſay that the Uſe of Plays does not contribute towards it.

When therefore *Levis* ſays, Plays do me no harm at all; it is the ſame thing as if he had ſaid, I have no Diſorder at all upon me; my Heart and all my Tempers are in that exact State of Purity and Perfection that they ſhould be.

Again: Let *Levis* conſider, that his Taſte and Reliſh of the Stage is a Demonſtration that he is already hurt by ſomething or other; and that his Heart is not in a right State of Religion. *Levis* thinks this is a very cenſorious Accuſation, becauſe he is known to be a very good Churchman, to live a regular Life for the moſt part, to be charitable, and a Well-wiſher to all good Deſigns. All this is true of *Levis*; but then it is a ſtrictly true, that his Taſte for Plays is a Demonſtration, that his Heart is not in a right State of Religion. For does *Levis* think, that his frequenting the Church is any Sign of the State of his Heart? Am I to believe, that he has inward Diſpoſitions that ſuit with the holy Strains of Divine Service, becauſe he likes to be at Church? I grant, I am to believe this; there is good Reaſon for it. But then, if *Levis* uſes the *Play-Houſe*, if the diſordered Paſſions the lewd Images, the profane Rant, and immodeſt Parts that are there acted, are a Pleaſure to him, is not this as ſtrong a Demonſtration that he has ſome Diſpoſitions and Tempers that ſuit with theſe Diſorders?

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If I am to conclude any thing from a Man's liking and frequenting Divine Service, is there not as certain a Concluſion to be drawn from a Man's liking and uſing the Stage? For the Stage can no more be liked, without having ſome inward Corruptions that are ſuitable to the Diſorders that are there repreſented, than the Divine Service can be a Pleaſure to any one, that has no Holineſs of Devotion in his Heart.

It is infallibly certain, that all Pleaſures ſhew the *State* and *Condition* of our Minds; and that nothing can pleaſe us, but what ſuits with ſome Diſpoſitions and Tempers that are within us; ſo that when we ſee a Man's Pleaſures, we are ſure that we ſee a great deal of his Nature. All *Forms* of Life, all *outward* Actions may deceive us. We cannot abſolutely ſay, that People have ſuch Tempers becauſe they do ſuch Actions; but wherever People place any *Delight*, or receive any *Pleaſures*, there we have an infallible Token of ſomething in their Nature, and of what Tempers they have within them.

Diverſions therefore and Pleaſures, which are reckoned ſuch uncertain Means of judging of the *State* of Mens Minds, are of all Means the moſt certain; becauſe nothing can pleaſe us or affect us but what is according to our Nature, which finds ſomething within us that is ſuitable to it. Had we not inward Diſpoſitions of *Tenderneſs* and *Compaſſion*, we ſhould not find ourſelves ſoftened and moved with *miſerable* Objects. Had we not ſomething *harmonious* in our Nature, we ſhould not find ourſelves pleaſed with Strains of *Muſic*. In like manner, had we not in our Nature lively Seeds of all thoſe Diſorders which are acted upon the Stage, where there not ſome *inward Corruption* that finds itſelf gratified by all the irregular Paſſions that are there repreſented, we ſhould find no more Pleaſure in the Stage, than blind Men find in *Pictures*, or deaf Men in *Muſic*.

And on the other Hand, if we were full of the contrary Tempers, were our Hearts full of Affections contrary to thoſe on the *Stage*, were we deeply affected with Deſires of Purity and Holineſs, we ſhould find ourſelves as much offended with all that paſſes upon the Stage, as *mild* and *gentle* Natures are offended at the Sight of *Cruelty*

and *Barbarity*. These Things are of the utmost Certainty.

All People therefore who use the *Stage*, have as much Assurance that their Heart his not in a right State of Religion, as they possibly can have of any thing that relates to themselves.

I hope, none of my Readers will think this too general, or too rash an Assertion; but that they will rather observe, that it is founded on such Evidence of Reason as cannot be rejected, without rejecting every thing that is plain and certain in Human Nature. They must not think it a sufficient Answer to this, to consider either how good they are themselves, or how many excellent Persons they know who do not abstain from the Stage. For this is a Way of reasoning that is not allowed in any other Case.

Now when it is affirmed, that all Persons who are pleased with the *Stage* must have some Corruptions of Heart, that are gratified with the corrupt Passions which are there acted, is not this as plain and evident, as if it was said, that all who are pleased with seeing barbarous Actions, must have some Seeds of Barbarity in their Nature? If you are delighted with the Stroke of the *Whip*, and love to see the *Blood* to fly, is it not past all Doubt that you have a Barbarity within you? And if *impure* Speeches, if *wanton* Amours, if *wild* Passions, and *immoral* Rant, can give you any Delight, is it not equally past all Doubt that you have something of all these Disorders in your Nature? Is it any more uncharitable to affirm this, than to affirm, that all who love to see the *Blood* fly have something barbarous in their Nature? Is there any more Rashness or Severity in it, than in saying, that all who love such or such Strains of *Music*, have some Disposition in their Nature that is gratified by them?

It signifies nothing therefore to say, that you know such or such excellent Persons who are pleased with the *Stage*, whom no one ought to suspect to be defective in Piety; it is as absurd as to say, that you know excellent Persons who are pleased with seeing barbarous Actions, whom no one ought to suspect to be defective in *Tenderness*. If you delight in barbarous Sights, and are pleased with the Groans and Pains of the Afflicted, I do not *suspect*

pect you to be defective in *Tenderneſs*, you have put your Caſe out of all Suſpicion, you have proved that you have a Barbarity in your Nature. So if you delight in the *Stage*, if you taſte and reliſh its Entertainment, I do not *ſuſpect* you to be *defective* in Piety; you have put your Caſe beyond Suſpicion; you have proved that you have Diſpoſitions in your Nature, that are gratified by the diſorderly Paſſions of the *Stage*.

Again, conſider it in another View: How is impoſſible that any one ſhould delight in the *Stage*, but through a Defect in Piety? For is not the Stage guilty of Impurity, Profaneneſs, Blaſphemy, and Immorality? Now though People may differ about the Degree in which they will make this Charge, yet all muſt own it in ſome Degree. Now if the Charge be but true in *any degree*, muſt there not be a Want of Piety in thoſe that can partake of an Entertainment chargeable with *Impurity*, *Profaneneſs*, and *Immorality?* If People were ſo pious that they could not bear ſuch an Entertainment as this, if nothing could perſuade them to be preſent at it, this would be no Proof that they were Saints; for to abhor an Entertainment loaded with ſo much Guilt, is but a ſmall Inſtance of an advanced Piety. But ſurely if they can not only bear it, but be pleaſed with it, it is proof enough, that their Hearts want ſeveral Degrees of Piety which become Chriſtians. Beſides, can pious Perſons, who uſe the *Stage*, tell you of any *one Play* for this forty or fifty Years, that has been free from *wild* Rant, *immodeſt* Paſſions, and *profane* Language? Muſt they not therefore be defective in Piety, who partake of a Diverſion that is at *no time* free from this Guilt in ſome degree or other? But ſuppoſing there was ſuch a thing as an *innocent Play* once or twice in an Age (which is like ſuppoſing *innocent* Luſt, *ſober* Rant, or *harmleſs* Profaneneſs) could this make it at all allowable for pious Perſons to uſe the *Stage?* Could this be any Proof that Perſons of real Piety might take Pleaſure in it? For could it be conſiſtent with an enlivened Piety to uſe a Diverſion, which in its *common ordinary* State is full of monſtrous Impiety, and Profaneneſs, becauſe it ſometimes happened in a Number of Years, that it might be innocent for a Day or two? But even this does not happen. The Stage never has

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one innocent Play; not one can be produced that ever you ſaw acted in *either Houſe*, but what abounds with *Thoughts*, *Paſſions*, and *Language*, contrary to Religion. Is there therefore any Raſhneſs or Severity in ſaying, That Perſons who uſe a Diverſion, which in its *ordinary* State is full of monſtrous Wickedneſs and Impiety, and in its *beſt* State is never free from Variety of Sin, muſt be defective in Piety? How can we know any thing with Clearneſs and Evidence, if we know not this to be clear and evident? For ſurely it is a neceſſary Part of Piety to abhor Lewdneſs, Immorality, or Profaneneſs, wherever they are; but they who are ſo pious as not to be able to be pleaſed where any of thoſe are, have a Piety that will not permit them ever to ſee a Play.

There is no Doctrine of our Bleſſed Saviour, that more concerns all Chriſtians, or is more eſſential to their Salvation, than this: *Bleſſed are the pure in Heart, for they ſhall ſee God.* Now take the *Stage* in its beſt State, when ſome admired *Tragedy* is upon it, are the *extravagant Paſſions* of diſtracted Lovers, the *impure Ravings* of inflamed Heroes, the *Joys* and *Torments* of Love, and *groſs Deſcriptions* of Luſt; are the *indecent* Actions, the *amorous* Tranſports, the *wanton* Addreſs of the Actors, which make ſo great a Part of the *moſt ſober* and *modeſt* Tragedies; are theſe things conſiſtent with this Chriſtian Doctrine of *Purity of Heart?* You may as well imagine that *Murder* and *Rapine* are conſiſtent with *Charity* and *Meekneſs*.

It is therefore as neceſſary, as reaſonable, and as conſiſtent with Chriſtian Charity, to tell *Levis* that his Uſe and Delight in the *Stage* is as certain a Proof of his Want of Piety, as to tell the ſame thing to a malicious, intemperate, or revengeful Perſon. Some People who are guilty of perſonal Vices may have ſome Violence of Temptation, ſome natural Diſorder to plead in their Excuſe; they perhaps may be ſo tender as to deſire to conceal them, and be afraid to encourage others in the like Practices; but the Uſe and Encouragement of the *Stage* has no Excuſes of this kind; it has no *Infirmity*, *Surpriſe*, or *Violence* of Temptation to appeal to; it ſhews no *Tenderneſs* of Mind, or *Concern* for others, but is a deliberate, continued, open, and public Declaration in fa-

your of *Lewdneſs*, *Immorality*, and *Profaneneſs*. Let any one but collect, not all the Wickedneſs that has appeared on the Stage ſince he firſt uſed it, but only ſo much as paſſes there in *any one* Seaſon, and then he will ſee what a dreadful Load of Guilt he has brought upon himſelf. For ſurely no one can be ſo weak as to imagine, that he can uſe and encourage a wicked Entertainment, without making himſelf a *full Sharer* of all its Wickedneſs.

Archbiſhop *Tillotſon* treats the Stage in this manner. 'I ſhall now ſpeak a few Words concerning *Plays*, which, 'as they are now ordered among us, are a *mighty Re-* 'proach to the Age and Nation.—As now the Stage is, 'they are *intolerable*, and not fit to be permitted in a *civi-* 'lized, much leſs a *Chriſtian* Nation. They do moſt *noto-* 'riouſly miniſter to Infidelity and Vice.—And therefore I 'do not ſee how any Perſon *pretending* to Sobriety and 'Virtue, and eſpecially to the *pure* and *holy* Religion of 'our Bleſſed Saviour, can without *great Guilt*, and open 'Contradiction to his holy Profeſſion, be preſent at ſuch 'lewd and immodeſt Plays, as too many are, who yet 'would take it very ill to be ſhut out of the Community 'of Chriſtians, as they would moſt certainly have been 'in the firſt and pureſt Ages of Chriſtianity*.'

Here let it be obſerved, that this Archbiſhop, who has generally been reckoned eminent for his *Moderation*, and *gentle* Manner of treating every thing, ſays of Plays, that they are a *mighty Reproach* to the Nation; that they are *intolerable*, and not fit to be permitted in a *civilized*, much leſs a *Chriſtian Nation*; that they *notoriouſly* miniſter to *Infidelity* and *Vice*.

Now this, I ſuppoſe, is as high a Charge, as he would have brought againſt the worſt Articles of *Popery*. If I have ſaid, that People cannot uſe the *Stage* without being defective in Piety, I have not ſaid it in a declaiming Way, but have aſſerted it from Variety of plain Arguments: But this great Man, ſo much admired for his *tender* Remarks upon *Perſons* and *Things*, goes much farther. He does not ſay, that People of real and advanced Piety cannot uſe the *Stage*, but he makes it inconſiſtent with ſo much as *pretending to Sobriety and Virtue*, much

* *Sermon upon corrupt Communication.*

much leſs the *Purity* of the *holy Religion* of our Bleſſed Saviour. He does not ſay, that ſuch People cannot be Excellent and Exemplary Chriſtians, or that they muſt be defective in Piety, but he charges them with *great Guilt*, and *open Contradiction* to their holy Religion, and aſſures them, that if they had lived in the *firſt* and *pureſt* Ages of Chriſtianity, they would have been excommunicated.

I have appealed to this *great Name*, for no other End, but to prevent the Charge of Uncharitableneſs. For ſurely, if ſuch an eminent Inſtance of a *charitable* and *gentle* Spirit can roundly affirm, that the Uſe of ſuch a *Stage* as ours is an *open Contradiction* to Chriſtianity, and ſuch a ſcandalous Offence, as would certainly have been puniſhed in the firſt and pureſt Ages of the Church with the dreadful Puniſhment of Excommunication; ſurely it can be no Proof of an *uncharitable Spirit* in me, that I ſhew by Variety of Arguments, that the Uſe of ſuch a *Stage* cannot conſiſt with the true Spirit of Chriſtianity, but that there muſt be *ſome Defect* in their Piety, who are able to uſe it.

Jucunda reſolves in great Chearfulneſs to hear no Arguments againſt the *Stage:* She ſays it can be but a *ſmall Sin*; and conſidering the Wickedneſs of the Age, that Perſon is in a very good State, that is only guilty of going to Plays. Deſire her ever ſo often only to conſider the plaineſt Arguments in the World, ſhe puts all off with only this Reply, *God ſend I may have no greater Sin to anſwer for, than ſeeing a Play!*

Jucunda thinks a Clergyman would do better, to inſiſt only upon the material Parts of Religion, and not lay ſo much Streſs upon Things that are only *Diverſions*, leſt by making Religion to contradict People in every thing, Religion itſelf ſhould be brought into Diſlike. *Jucunda* deſires, that ſhe may be inſtructed in ſome greater Things, than the Sinfulneſs of going to a *Play*; for ſhe is reſolved to hear no more of that.

But pray, *Jucunda*, conſider all that you have here ſaid. You ſay it can be but a *ſmall Sin*. How is it that you know it is but a *ſmall Sin?* What care have you taken to underſtand its true Magnitude? You ſhut your Eyes, and ſtop your Ears, and reſolve againſt all Information about it, and then call it a *ſmall Sin*. But ſuppoſe it was but

a *ſmall Sin*; is that a Reaſon why you ſhould be guilty of it? Does the Smallneſs of Sins recommend them to your Choice? Our Bleſſed Saviour ſays *, *If thy Foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into Life, than having two Feet to be caſt into Hell. And if thine Eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with one Eye, than having two Eyes to be caſt into Hell-fire.* Now this Paſſage, I ſuppoſe, does not mean, If thou art guilty of ſome great Sin, either of *Murder*, *Perjury*, or the like, thou muſt cut them off. For the Compariſon of a *Foot* and an *Eye*, muſt ſignify ſomething that is not directly ſinful in itſelf, but only dangerous in its Uſe; as it ſets us too near to ſome Sins, or is become too full of Temptation. Yet ſuch Ways of Life as theſe, which are only dangerous, and expoſe our Virtue to too great a Hazard, however pleaſant and uſeful, though like an Eye or Foot, are yet to be entirely cut off that we may not fall into Hell-fire. Can it be ſuppoſed that *Jucunda* is of this Religion, who pleaſes herſelf with a Diverſion, becauſe it is but a *ſmall Sin?* Will ſhe ever think of ſaving herſelf by cutting off a *Foot*, or plucking out an *Eye?*

Indeed, to talk of a *ſmall Sin*, is like talking of a *ſmall Law* of God. For as there is no Law of God but is a *great* one, becauſes it comes from God, ſo every Sin, as it is a Tranſgreſſion of ſome Law of God, muſt needs be a great one. There may be Sins that have a ſmaller degree of Guilt, becauſe they are committed through *Infirmity*, *Ignorance*, or *Surpriſe*; but no Sin is ſmall, that is either careleſsly or wilfully continued in. If it be a Sin therefore to uſe the *Stage*, it cannot be a *ſmall one*, becauſe it has none of thoſe Circumſtances which render a Sin a ſmall one. It becomes a very great one to *Jucunda*, becauſe ſhe careleſsly and wilfully reſolves to continue in it, merely for the ſake of a little Diverſion.

Let *Jucunda* conſider again, what ſhe means by wiſhing that ſhe may have no greater Sin to anſwer for than going to a Play. It is a Wiſh that is ſilly in itſelf, becauſe ſhe is not to wiſh to die in ſmall Sins, but in a perfect Repentance and Abhorrence of all kind of Sin; but it is much ſillier ſtill, when it is given as a Reaſon for going to

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* *Mark* ix. 45, 47.

a *Play*. For it is saying, *I expect to die guilty of greater Sins than of going to a Play, and therefore there is no Occasion to forbear from that*. Now if she understands herself, she must know, that this is the plain Meaning of her Words. Yet who that understands any thing of Religion, or that has any Desire of Holiness, can talk at this rate? It is a Language that is fitter for an *Atheist*, than for a Person that is but *half* a Christian. If a Tradesman that allows himself only to lie in the Prices of his Goods, should content himself with saying, *God send I may have no greater Sin to answer for*, no one would suppose him to be much concerned about Religion. Yet as many Christian Reasons might be produced, to shew these Lies to be but small Sins, as to shew that the Use of the Stage is but a *small Sin*.

Jucunda would have a *Clergyman* insist upon the most material Parts of Religion, and not lay so much Stress upon Things that are only Diversions. I am of your mind, *Jucunda*, that a Clergyman ought to insist upon the most material Parts of Religion; but then it does not follow, that he must not lay much Stress upon things that are *Diversions*. For as something that is called a Diversion may be entirely sinful, so if this should happen, it is as necessary for a Clergyman to call all Christians from it, as it is necessary to exhort them to keep the Commandments. Religion seems to have as little to do with *Trades* as with *Diversions*; yet if a Trade be set up, that is in its own Nature wicked, there is nothing more material in Religion, than to declare the Necessity of forsaking such an Employment. But after all, *Jucunda*, the most essential and most *material* Parts of Religion, are such as relate to *common Life*, such as alter our Ways of living, such at give Rules, to all our Actions, and are the Measure of all our Conduct, whether in Business or Diversion. Nothing is so important in Religion to you, as that which makes you sober and wise, holy and heavenly minded, in the whole Course of your Life. But you are for such *material Parts* of Religion, as should only distinguish you from a *Jew* or an *Infidel*, but make no Difference in common Life betwixt you and *Fops* and *Coquets*. You are for a Religion that consists in Modes, and forms of Worship, that is tied to *Times* and *Places*,

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that only takes up a little of your time on *Sundays*, and leaves you all the Week to do as you pleaſe. But all this, *Jucunda*, is nothing. The Scripture has not ſaid in vain, *He that is in Chriſt is a new Creature.* All the Law and the Goſpel are vain to you; all Sacraments, Devotions, Doctrines, and Ordinances are to no Purpoſe, unleſs they make you this *new Creature* in all the Actions of your Life. He teaches you the moſt material Parts of Religion, who teaches you to be of a *religious Spirit* in every thing that you do; who teaches you to eat and drink, to labour and reſt, to converſe and divert yourſelf in ſuch Degrees, and to ſuch Ends, as beſt promote a pious Life.

If *Sots* and *Gluttons* ſhould deſire a *Clergyman* to inſiſt upon the moſt material Parts of Religion, and not lay ſo great a ſtreſs upon *Gluttony* and *Intemperance*, which are things that only relate to *eating* and *drinking*, they would ſhew that they underſtood Religion as well as *Jucunda*. For every one muſt ſee, that *ſome Diverſions* may as much diſorder the Heart, and be as contrary to Religion, as *Gluttony* and *Intemperance*. And perhaps as many People have lived and died unaffected with Religion, through a Courſe of *Diverſions* and *Pleaſures*, as through Gluttony and Intemperance.

If it diſpleaſes People to be told, that Religion is to preſcribe Rules to their Diverſions, they are as unreaſonable as thoſe are, who are diſpleaſed that Religion ſhould preſcribe Rules to their Tempers, and Paſſions, and Inclinations. For as Diverſions are only the Gratifications of our Tempers, ſo if Religion is to forbear us in our Diverſions, it is to forbear our Tempers, Paſſions, and Inclinations. But the Truth is, we ought to be more religiouſly cautious and watchful about our Diverſions, than any other Part of common Life, not only becauſe they take ſuch deep hold of us, but becauſe they have no neceſſary Foundation in Nature, but are our own Inventions. *Trade* and Buſineſs, though they are neceſſary for great Ends of Life, are yet to be ſubject to the ſtricteſt Rules of Religion; ſurely therefore *Diverſions*, which are but like ſo many *Blanks* in Life, they are only invented to get rid of Time, ſurely ſuch things ought of all others to have no *Mixture* of any thing that is ſinful in them.

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For if the thing itſelf be hardly pardonable, ſurely it muſt be a high Crime to add to it the Sin of doing it in a ſinful manner. For as Diverſions are at beſt only Methods of loſing Time, the moſt innocent have ſomething in them that ſeems to want a Pardon; but if we cannot be content with ſuch as only paſs away our Hours, unleſs they gratify our diſordered Paſſions, we are like thoſe who are not content to ſleep away their Time, unleſs they can add the Pleaſure of ſinful Dreams.

Jucunda therefore is much miſtaken, if ſhe thinks that Religion has nothing to do with her Diverſions; for there is nothing that requires a more religious Exactneſs than they do. If we are wrong in them, it is the ſame thing as if we are wrong in our Religion, or ſinful in our Buſineſs. Nay, Sin in our Diverſions is leſs excuſable, and perhaps does us more harm than in any thing elſe. For ſuch as our Diverſions are, ſuch are we ourſelves. If Religion therefore is to have any Power over us, if it is to enter into our Hearts, and alter and reform the State of our Souls, the greateſt Work that it has to do, is to remove us from ſuch Pleaſures and Ways of Life as nouriſh and ſupport a wrong State of our Souls.

If dying Sinners that go out of the World under a Load of Guilt could ſee what brought them into that State, it would often be found, that all their Sins, and Impieties, and Neglect of Duty, were ſolely owing to their Diverſions; and perhaps were they to live their Lives over again, there would be no other poſſible Way of living better than they had done, but by renouncing ſuch Ways of Life as were only looked upon as Diverſions and Amuſements.

People of Faſhion and Quality have great Advantage above the Vulgar; their Condition and Education give them a Livelineſs and Brightneſs of Parts, from whence one might juſtly expect a more exalted Virtue. How comes it then, that we ſee as ill *Morals*, as open *Impiety*, as little *religious Wiſdom*, and as great *Diſorders* among them, as among the moſt rude uneducated Part of the World? It is becauſe the *Politeneſs* of their Lives, their Courſe of Diverſions and Amuſements, and their Ways of ſpending their Time, as much extinguiſh the *Wiſdom* and *Light* of Religion, as the Groſſneſs and Ignorance of the

the dulleſt Part of the World. A poor Creature that is doomed to a ſtupid Converſation, that ſees nothing but *Drudgery*, and *Eating*, *Drinking*, and *Sleeping*, is as likely to have his Soul aſpire to God, and aim at an exalted Virtue, as another that is always in the Brightneſs and Gaiety of polite Pleaſures. It is the ſame thing, whether the *good Seed* be burnt up with the Heat and Brightneſs of the *Sun*, or be loſt in *Mud*. Many Perſons that live and die in a *Mine*, that are confined to Drudgery and Darkneſs, are juſt ſo fatally deſtroyed by their way of Life, as others that live in a Circle of Pleaſures and polite Engagements are deſtroyed by their way of Life. Every one ſees and owns the Effects of ſuch a groſs way of Life; it is not uſual to expect any thing wiſe, or holy, or truly great, from Perſons that live and die digging *Coals*. But then it is not enough conſidered, that there are other ways of Life, of a contrary Appearance, that as certainly and unavoidably produce the ſame Effects. For a Heart that is devoted to *polite* Pleaſures, that is taken up with a Succeſſion of vain and corrupt *Diverſions*, that is employed in *Aſſemblies*, *Gaming*, *Plays*, *Balls*, and ſuch like Buſineſs of a *genteel* Life, is as much diſpoſed of, and taken as far out of the way of true Religion, and a divine and holy Life, as if it had been ſhut up in a *Mine* Theſe are plain and certain Truths, if there is any thing plain and certain, either in the Nature of Religion, or the Nature of Man. Who expects Piety from a *Tapſter*, that lives among the Rudeneſs, Noiſe, and Intemperance of an *Ale-Houſe?* Who expects Chriſtian Holineſs from a *Juggler*, that goes about with his *Cups* and *Balls?* Yet why is not this as reaſonable, as to expect Piety and Chriſtian Holineſs from a *fine Gentleman* that lives at a *Gaming-Table?* Is there any more reaſon to look for Chriſtian Fortitude, divine Tempers, or religious Greatneſs of Mind, in this State of Life? Had ſuch a one been born in low Life with the ſame turn of Mind, it had in all probability fixed him in an *Ale-Houſe*, or furniſhed him with *Cups* and *Balls*.

The ſober honeſt Employments of Life, and the reaſonable Cares of every Condition in the World, make it ſufficiently difficult for People to live enough to God, and to act with ſuch holy and wiſe Tempers as Religion requires. But if we make our Wealth and Fortunes the

Gratifications of idle and disordered Passions, we may make it as difficult to be saved in a State of *Politeness* and *Gentility*, as in the *basest* Occupations of Life.

Religion requires a steady resolute Use of our best Understanding, and an earnest Application to God for the Light and Assistance of his Holy Spirit.

It is only this watchful Temper, that is full of Attention to every thing that is right and good, that watches over our Minds, and guards our Hearts, that desires Wisdom, and constantly calls upon God for the Light and Joy of his holy Spirit; it is this Temper alone that can preserve us in any true State of Christian Holiness. There is no Possibility of having our Minds strenghtened and fixed in wise and reasonable Judgements, or our Hearts full of good and regular Motions, but by living in such a *way of Life* as assists and improves our Mind, and prepares and disposes us to receive the Spirit of God. This is as certainly the *one only* way to Holiness, as there is but one God that is Holy. Religion can no more subsist in a trifling vain Spirit, that lives by Humour and Fancy, that is full of Levity and Impertinence, wandring from Passion to Passion, giddy with silly Joys, and burdened with impertinent Cares, it can no more subsist with this State of the Soul, than it can dwell in a Heart *devoted* to Sin.

Any way of Life therefore that darkens our Minds, that misemploys our Understanding, that fills us with a trifling Spirit, that disorders our Passions, that separates us from the Spirit of God, is the same certain Road to Destruction, whether it arises from stupid *Sensuality*, rude *Ignorance*, or polite *Pleasures*. Had any one therefore the Power of an *Apostle*, or the Tongue of an Angel, he could not employ it better, than in censuring and condemning those ways of Life, which *Wealth*, *Corruption*, and *Politeness*, have brought among us. We indeed only call them Diversions; but they do the whole Work of *Idolatry* and *Infidelity*, and fill People with so much Blindness and Hardness of Heart, that they neither live by Wisdom, nor feel the want of it, but are content to play away their Lives, as regardless of every thing that is wise, and holy, and divine, as if they were mere *Birds* or *Animals*, and as thoughtless of Death, and Judgment, and Eternity, as if these were Things that had no Relation to human Life.

Now all this Blindneſs and Hardneſs of Heart is owing to this way of Life which People of Fortune generally fall into. It is not groſs Sins, it is not *Murder*, or *Adultery*, but it is their *Gentility* and *Politeneſs* that deſtroys them: It fills them with ſuch Paſſions and Pleaſures, as quite extinguiſh the gentle Light of Reaſon and Religion. For if Religion requires a ſober Turn of Mind; if we cannot be reaſonable, but by ſubduing and governing our blind Tempers and Paſſions; if the moſt neceſſary Enjoyments of Life require great Caution and Sobriety, that our Souls be not made earthly and ſenſual by them; what way of Life can ſo waſte and deſtroy our Souls, ſo ſtrengthen our Paſſions, and diſorder our Hearts, as a Life of ſuch Diverſions, Entertainments, and Pleaſures, as are the *Buſineſs* of great Part of the World?

If Religion is to reform our Souls, to deliver us from the Corruption of our Nature, to reſtore the divine Image, and fill us with ſuch Tempers of Purity and Perfection, as may fit us for the Eternal Enjoyment of God, what is the polite Part of the World doing? For how can any one more reſiſt ſuch a Religion as this; how can he more renounce the Grace of God, and hinder the Recovery of the Divine Image, than by living in a Succeſſion of ſuch Enjoyments, as the Generality of People of Faſhion are devoted to? For no one who uſes the *Stage* has any more Reaſon to expect to grow in the Grace of God, or to be enlighted and purified by his Holy Spirit, than he that never uſes any Devotion. So that it is not to be wondered at, if the Spirit and Power of Religion is wanted, where People ſo live, as neither to be fit to receive, nor able to co-operate with the Aſſiſtance and Light of God's Holy Spirit,

We are taught, that *Charity covereth a multitude of ſins*; and that *alms ſhall purge away ſins*. Now let this teach ſome People how to judge of the Guilt of thoſe Gifts and Contributions, which are given contrary to Charity. I do not mean ſuch Money as is idly and impertinently ſquandered away, but ſuch *Gifts* and *Contributions* as are to ſupport People in a wicked Life. For this is ſo great a Contradiction to Charity, that it muſt certainly have

Effects contrary to it: It must as much cover our *Virtues*, as Charity covers our Sins.

It is no strange Thing, to hear of *Ladies* taking care of a *Benefit Night* in the Play-House. But surely they never reflect upon what they are doing. For if there is any Blessing that attends Charity, there must as great a Curse attend such Liberalities, as are to reward People for their Wickedness, and make them happy and prosperous in an unchristian Profession. How can they expect the Blessings of God, or to have the Virtues and Charities placed to their Account, when they have blotted them out by their Contributions and Generosities to the most open Enemies of the Purity and Holiness of Christ's Religion? He that is thus in the Interest of the Play-House, is most openly against God, and is as certainly opposing Religion, as he that rewards those that labour in the Cause of Infidelity.

It is no uncharitable Assertion to affirm, that a Player cannot be a living Member of Christ, or in a true State of Grace, till he renounces his Profession with a sincere and deep Repentance. Christianity no more allows such Plays and Players as ours are, than it allows the grossest Vices. They are Objects of no other Charity or Kindness, than such as may reduce them to a sincere Repentance. What a Guilt therefore do they bring upon themselves, who make Players their Favourites, and public Objects of their Care and Generosity, who cannot be in the Favour of God, till they cease to be such as they encourage them to be, till they renounce that Life for which they esteem and reward them?

When an Object of *Distress* is offered to People, it is common to see them very scrupulous in their Charity; they seem to think there may be such a thing as a blameable Charity; they desire to know whether the Person be worthy, whether his Distress is not owing to his Follies and Extravagancies, that they may not relieve such a one as ought to feel the Punishment of his Follies. But what must we say to these things, if those who are thus nice in their *Alms* are yet unreasonable in their *Generosities*; who are afraid of assisting a poor Man, till every thing can be said in his Favour, and yet eager to make another rich,

rich, who is only recommended by his Follies? What ſhall we ſay to theſe things, if Perſons who have ſo many Rules to govern and reſtrain their Piety to poor Men, have yet no Rules to govern their Liberalities and Kindneſs to Libertines if they ſhould have a *Benefit-Night* upon their hands, not to relieve the Poverty but to reward the *Merit* of a Player, that he may have the Subſiſtence of a *Gentleman* from Chriſtians, for a way of Life that would be a Reproach to a ſober Heathen? Shall we reckon this among our ſmall Offences? Is this a pardonable Inſtance of the Weakneſs of human Nature? Is it not rather an undeniable Proof, that Chriſtianity has no hold of our Reaſon and Judgment; and that we muſt be born again from ſuch a State of Heart as this, before we can enter into the Spirit of Chriſtianity?

I have now only one thing to deſire of the Reader, not that he would like and approve of theſe Reflections, but that he will not ſuffer himſelf to diſlike or condemn them, till he has put his Arguments into Form, and know how many Doctrines of Scripture he can bring againſt thoſe things that I have aſſerted. So far as he can ſhew that I have reaſoned wrong, or miſtook the Doctrine of Scripture, ſo far he has a Right to cenſure. But *general Diſlikes* are mere *Tempers*, as blind as *Paſſions*, and are always the ſtrongeſt where Reaſons are moſt wanted. If People will diſlike becauſe they will, and condemn Doctrines only becauſe it ſuits better with their *Tempers* and *Practices*, than to conſider and underſtand them to be true, they act by the ſame Spirit of *Popery* as is moſt remarkable in the *loweſt Bigots*, who are reſolute in a *general Diſlike* of all *Proteſtant* Doctrines, without ſuffering themſelves to conſider and underſtand upon what Truth they are founded.

I can eaſily imagine that ſome People will cenſure theſe Doctrines, as proceeding from a *rigid uncharitable* Temper, becauſe they ſeem to condemn ſo great a Part of the World. Had I wrote a Treatiſe againſt *Covetouſneſs* or *Intemperance*, it had certainly condemned great Part of the World; but ſurely he muſt have ſtrangely forgotten himſelf that ſhould make that a Reaſon of accuſing me of an uncharitable Temper. Such People ſhould conſider

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alſo, that a Man cannot aſſert the Doctrines of Chriſtian *Charity* and *Meekneſs* themſelves, without condemning a very great Part of the World. But would it be an Inſtance of an uncharitabe Spirit to preach up the Neceſſity of an univerſal Charity, becauſe it might condemn a very great Part of the World? and if the *Holineſs* of Chriſtianity cannot be aſſerted without condemning the Pleaſures and Entertainments of the faſhionable Part of the World, is there any more Uncharitableneſs in this, than in aſſerting the Doctrine of univerſal Love? Does this any more ſhew an *unchriſtian rigid* Spirit than when the beloved Apoſtle ſaid, *All that is in the World, the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World?*

But I ſhall not now conſider any more Objections, but leave all that I have ſaid to the Conſcience and Reaſon of every Perſon. Let him but make Reaſon and Religion the Meaſure of his Judgment, and then he is as favourable to me as I deſire him to be.

It is very common and natural for People to ſtruggle hard, and be loth to own any thing to be wrong that they have long practiſed. Many People will ſee ſo much Truth in theſe Arguments againſt the *Stage*, that they will wiſh in their own Minds that they had always forborn it. But then finding that they cannot aſſent to theſe Arguments, without taking a great deal of Blame to themſelves, they will find ſtrong Inclinations to condemn the plaineſt Reaſonings, rather than condemn themſelves. Let but a Perſon forget that he has any Guilt in Relation to the *Stage*, let him but ſuppoſe that he has nevet been there, and that he will go or ſtay away, juſt as he finds Reaſon when he has examined all that can be ſaid againſt it, let a Man but put himſelf in this State of Mind, and then he will ſee all the Arguments againſt the Stage as plain and convincing, as any that can be brought againſt the groſſeſt Vices.

If we could look into the Minds of the ſeveral Sorts of Readers, we ſhould ſee how differently People are affected with Arguments, according to the State that they are in. We ſhould ſee how they, who have never uſed the *Stage*, conſent with the whole Force of their Minds, and ſee the

Certainty and Plainneſs of every Argument againſt it. We ſhould ſee others ſtruggling and contending againſt all Conviction, in proportion to the Uſe that they have made of the *Stage*. They that have been its Friends and Advocates, and conſtant Admirers, will hate the very Name of a Book that is written againſt it, and will condemn every Argument without knowing what it is. They who have uſed the *Stage* much, though in a leſs degree than this, will perhaps vouchſafe to read a Book againſt it; but they will read with Fear, they will ſtrive not to be convinced, and be angry at every Argument for proving ſo much as it does. Others, that have uſed the *Stage* in the moſt moderate degrees, have yet great Prejudices: They perhaps will own that the *Stage* is blameable, and that it is very well to perſuade People from it: But then theſe People will not aſſent to the whole Truth. They will not condemn the Stage as they ought, becauſe having been there ſometimes themſelves, it ſuits better with their own Practice only to condemn it in the general, than to declare it to be ſinful in ſuch a degree, as ſhould condemn thoſe who ever uſe it.

Theſe are the ſeveral Difficulties which this Treatiſe has to contend with: It is to oppoſe an evil Practice, and charge it with *ſuch a Degree* of Guilt, as few can conſent to without taking ſome Part of that Guilt to themſelves.

I have mentioned theſe ſeveral Degrees of Prejudice, to put People upon ſuſpecting themſelves, and trying the State of their Hearts. For the only way to be wiſe and reaſonable is to ſuſpect ourſelves, and put Queſtions to ourſelves in private, which only our own Hearts can anſwer. Let any one who reads this Treatiſe, aſk himſelf, Whether he reads it as he reads thoſe things which have no Relation to himſelf? When he reads a Treatiſe againſt *Image Worſhip*, or Prayers to *Saints*, he knows that he attends to the whole Force of the Arguments; that he deſires to ſee them in their full Strength, and to comprehend every Evil that they charge upon it. Now every one can tell whether he reads this Treatiſe with this Temper, or whether he comes heavily to it, and unwilling to be convinced by it. If this is his State, he ought to charge himſelf

himſelf with all that which he charges upon the moſt abſurd and perverſe People in Life. For it is only this Temper, and *Inclination* not to be convinced, that makes People ſo *poſitive* and *obſtinate* in Ways and Opinions that appear ſo ſhocking to all reaſonable Men. It is this Temper that makes the *Jew*, the *Infidel*, the *Papiſt*, and the *Fanatic* of every kind. And he that is not reaſonable enough to read impartially a Treatiſe againſt the *Stage*, has no Reaſon to think that his Mind is in better Order than theirs is, who cannot freely conſider a Book that is wrote againſt the *Worſhip of Images*, and Prayers to *Saints*.

There is but one Thing for reaſonable People to do in this Caſe, either to anſwer all the Arguments here produced againſt the *Stage*, or to yield to the Truth of them, and regulate their Lives according to them. Our Conduct in this Affair is far from being a ſmall Matter. I have produced no Arguments, but ſuch as are taken from the moſt eſſential Parts of Religion: If therefore there is any Truth in them, the Uſe of the *Stage* is certainly to be reckoned among *great* and *flagrant* Sins.

I have now only to adviſe thoſe, who are hereby made ſenſible of the Neceſſity of renouncing the *Stage*, that they will act in this Caſe, as they expect that others ſhould act in Caſes of the like Nature; that they will not think it ſufficient to forbear the Stage themſelves, but be inſtrumental as far as they can in keeping others from it; and that they will think it as neceſſary to make this Amends for their former Compliance, and ill Example, as it is neceſſary to make *Reſtitution* in Caſes of Injury. The Cauſe of Religion, the Honour of God, the Good of their Neighbour, and the Peace and Satisfaction of their own Minds neceſſarily require this at their Hands. For as no one can tell how far his Example may have influenced others, and how many People may have been injured by his Means, ſo it is abſolutely neceſſary, that he do as much good as he can by a better Example, and make his own Change of Life a Means of reducing others to the ſame State of Amendment.

FINIS.